

PART III
THE CONFLICT BROADENS



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A192210

The hood of a jeep serves as a makeshift altar for Cdr Martin J. Doermann, 12th Marines regimental chaplain, at Gio Linh, south of the Demilitarized Zone, on Thanksgiving Day 1968. Cdr Doermann was among 20 chaplains visiting forward units that holiday.

CHAPTER 6

Calming and Comforting (January - June 1966)

Combat Action in Early 1966—NSA and MCB Chaplains at Da Nang—Administrative Adjustments—1st Marine Division Arrives at Chu Lai—1st Marine Aircraft Wing Chaplains, January-April 1966—The Buddhist Revolt—Easter and Passover in I Corps

The year 1966 dawned rather hopefully for the chaplains in Vietnam. The structure of the coverage and ministry to the Marines and sailors in country was gratifyingly complete and joined to a secure system of chaplain distribution inaugurated by the cooperative efforts of the III MAF and 3d Division chaplains. Civic action efforts in which many chaplains were involved seemed to be progressively well organized, a genuine benefit to the people of Vietnam living near the enclaves, and beneficial to the military units in terms of good relations with the villagers. The Marine Corps was increasingly aware of the need for and value of greater efforts in the direction of understanding and respecting the Vietnamese people and culture, and chaplains generally felt they had significant contributions to make to this category of the American impact on that small country.

The commitment of Marines in 1965 had stopped the deterioration of Government of Vietnam control over the vital areas of the I Corps. Marines hoped that in 1966 they could start rolling back the Communist forces. These hopes were to be frustrated as more North Vietnamese regulars entered the war and the fighting broadened in area and in intensity. Chaplains had dealt with disappointment, pain, and death in the previous year. They were to experience more of the same on a larger scale during 1966.

The chaplains were alternatively encouraged, amazed, frightened, and sobered by the events of the broadening war, yet, their ministry never faltered. They comforted the troubled, wounded, and dying, and substantially increased the ministry in combat to the men they loved. "Ever since Bunker Hill, the man behind the man behind the gun has carried a Bible, comforted the wounded and prayed for the dead,"¹ noted *Time* magazine in February 1966. By the end of the year the U.S. Forces in Vietnam grew to 389,000 including 70,000 Marines in the ICTZ. The Chaplain Corps now numbered 93 chaplains assigned to Navy and Marine Corps units

for duty ashore in Vietnam. This was the largest number committed to a combat area at one time since World War II. Seventy-six chaplains were attached to Marine Corps combat units and elements in Vietnam, almost 20 percent of the entire Corps and already 32 more than the total number serving ashore in the Korean War.²

The principle of ministry in Vietnam was one of accessibility of worship opportunity to every individual at least once a week. It was to that task that the Chaplain Corps dedicated itself despite the fact that by 1 November 1966 the III MAF tactical area of responsibility was extended to 75 times its size of a year earlier. The job was there to be done.

Combat Action in Early 1966

The first four months of 1966 were eventful ones for chaplains in the Da Nang combat base. The mounting intensity of search and destroy missions near Chu Lai was felt by Da Nang chaplains who participated alongside their Chu Lai comrades in the combat operations. The 9th Marines was positioned on the southern perimeter of Da Nang and was responsible for a rapidly expanding TAOR. By the summer months the 9th Marines TAOR was to exceed an area of 200 square miles.

On the northern and western perimeters of Da Nang were battalions of the 3d Marines. Since Chaplain Running had come ashore with the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines in March of 1965 and Chaplain Bohula had taken up position with the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines in country in May, the regimental TAOR had been steadily expanding. It became apparent that an operational link-up with Phu Bai, similar to that planned between Da Nang and Chu Lai, should eventually occur. Before Easter 1966, although Phu Bai was rapidly building and operations near the DMZ appeared to be just beyond the horizon, most of the action remained between Da Nang and Chu Lai. A breakthrough in operational activity, and movement northwestward, began to occur in the ear-

ly summer. At this stage in the buildup it appeared as if the coastal enclave strategy was a sound one and as the enclaves expanded it was anticipated that regiments would once again become consolidated. This had occurred in the 3d and 9th Marines at Da Nang, the 7th Marines in Chu Lai, and soon to occur with the 4th Marines at Phu Bai. In view of the growing number of chaplains within the command structures of the 3d Marine Division it became necessary, in the interest of effective supervision and training of younger, inexperienced chaplains, to reaffirm the position of regimental chaplain and depend upon him to function as a structural intermediary between the battalion chaplains and the division chaplain. Chaplain Morton's decision in the 3d Division was to assign a regimental chaplain to each regiment with two Protestants and two Roman Catholics. Independent or separate battalions were staffed largely with Protestant chaplains who looked to assistant division chaplain Maguire as their immediate supervisor.

Commander Jonathan C. Brown Jr. (Southern Baptist) was the 3d Marines first regimental chaplain in Vietnam. At the time of his arrival only two of the three battalions were in country and each of them had a Protestant chaplain attached. Lieutenant Curtis W. Brannon (Southern Baptist) was with the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines and Chaplain Arthur D. Seeland had recently relieved Chaplain Eugene M. Smith with the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines and had relocated, with his battalion, from Chu Lai to Da Nang. Since Chaplain Bohula was with the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines on Okinawa, Chaplain Brown was woefully short of Catholic coverage in the regiment until Lieutenant George R. Witt (Roman Catholic) was assigned to 1st Battalion, 3d Marines in March.

Chaplain Brown was well received by the regiment. He was given a tent as a combination office and living space, central to the command and to the chaplains. There was no chapel at the regimental CP but a strongback tent was soon erected and dedicated as the CP chapel. Chaplain Brown's schedule consisted of two or three divine services each day, and on Sunday. Each day was filled with religious instructions, counselling, Red Cross messages, and small-group lectures.

Once Chaplain Witt reported to his battalion on 19 March he displayed that most essential quality in a combat chaplain—a sense of humor. He reported:

I spent two weeks under the wing of the Division Chaplain Frank Morton, who kept shaking his head.

Despite his doubts, I "graduated" and was assigned to 1st Battalion, 3d Marines. However, prior to my relieving Curt Brannon, the battalion had mounted out on Operation Orange. Since this was my first operation, I gave extra attention to digging an adequate foxhole. I will not claim to have had the deepest hole, but I was the only one who had a ladder.³

The 1st Battalion, 3d Marines TAOR was the northern area of the Da Nang perimeter, and included more than 20 positions maintained by four line companies. Protestant coverage was given by Chaplain Brown, and later Chaplain Paul Lionberger who, in June, relieved Brown as regimental chaplain. Divine services were held weekly in every position, from the Combined Action Companies to Dong Den, 950 meters high on a mountain. Chaplains Witt and Brown conducted a teamwork ministry that proved highly productive. Chaplain Brown remembered:

The First Battalion had companies and platoons scattered all across our northern sector of the TAOR, so I spent Monday through Friday having three and four Divine Services a day for these companies. For some of the locations Chaplain Witt and I would go together. While I was conducting my services he would be hearing confessions, and when I finished, he would celebrate Mass, and I would interview Protestant men who needed my assistance. Then we would move to another platoon. My Regimental Commander and Executive Officer were devout men and attended the chapel services each Sunday. This kind of leadership resulted in excellent attendance at our Divine Services.⁴

It was during the first quarter of 1966 that Chaplain Morton devised a system of unit coverage which he proposed to the regimental and battalion chaplains for use in increasing their religious coverage of the units. It was a matter of procedure and scheduling in which the unit chaplain would visit each of his scattered positions, remaining overnight with each company once a week. This meant that he was out of the CP area from Monday through Friday and returned to his headquarters for his Sunday services. Chaplain Morton's program was implemented throughout the division and met with routine success. Chaplain Ahrensbrak reported that he adopted the system and found it helped him to meet the needs of his people and to fulfill his responsibilities to them.

At this time it was becoming apparent that combat operations in the Hue-Phu Bai enclave were increasing. Subtle changes in Viet Cong strategy were beginning to manifest themselves and appeared to



Photo 3d Marine Division

LtGen Walt reads the scripture lesson at the 1966 Protestant Easter Service in Da Nang.

be tied to the succession of defeats suffered by North Vietnamese forces in the Chu Lai and Da Nang areas. North Vietnamese troop concentrations were being discovered more frequently in the more northern provinces of I Corps. The succession of multi-battalion search and destroy operations south of Da Nang had succeeded in bloodying a number of hard-core North Vietnamese regular units. The tactic of deploying blocking forces by the same aircraft, all within a few hours, made mobility of VC forces more

difficult to maintain. It became obvious that sanctuaries, which American forces were not permitted to enter, represented an answer to vertical envelopment blocking tactics. Combat activity, therefore, increased near the sanctuaries of Laos. By the time the first quarter was past the next phase of the war was clearly outlined. There would be a gradual shift northward in major combat operations.

Five combat operations originated from Phu Bai during the first four months of 1966. The 2d Bat-

talion, 1st Marines, responsible for the security of Phu Bai's perimeter, conducted the first four, all single-battalion operations, in February and March. The fourth battalion operation to occur in Thua Thien Province was Operation Oregon, with the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines probing deeper into the coastal plain north of Hue. Operation Virginia was the fifth and most extensive probe of the period. Chaplain Scanlon accompanied his troops of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines and Chaplains Johnson of MCB-7 and Handley of the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines went into the field to provide Protestant coverage for the battalion.

Chaplain Scanlon reported:

Operation Virginia was to take us north near the DMZ, to Khe Sanh, close to Laos and the North Vietnamese border where there was a Special Forces Camp. During the first phase the battalion would probe the areas surrounding Khe Sanh. The buildings at Khe Sanh which were used for a temporary hospital were infested with rats. We slept with the rats running around all night. They could not be poisoned because the Montagnards in the area were reputed to eat rats raw.⁵

During the first phase, Mass was offered in the field and confessions heard at all company areas. Chaplains Handley and Johnson gave services at all company areas. There was no lack of chaplain support.

The second phase of Operation Virginia was to take 1st Battalion, 1st Marines on a march from Khe Sanh to Quang Tri and Dong Ha along Route 9. Chaplain Scanlon remembered:

The Colonel wanted me to go along. I had misgivings because the temporary hospital at Khe Sanh would be left without a chaplain. Still, the Colonel was apprehensive about being hit at night without a chaplain for the casualties. And so, I went.

We started our hike at midnight, and without a moon it was so dark you couldn't see your hand in front of you. As a matter of fact, when the column stopped we frequently ran into one another. We sweated profusely and we drank water and ate salt continuously. It had been anticipated that we would reach our first checkpoint by dawn and pick up rations to be flown in.⁶

The terrain proved tougher than expected and by mid-afternoon the battalions were still heading for the checkpoint. The path was in a valley and was infernally hot. It had been a road large enough for cars some 20 years earlier and traffic signs which appeared seemed rather ludicrous since they were now practically in the middle of a jungle. Bridges over

scenic chasms gave mute evidence of past hostility since some of them had been blown by charges and were just hanging on by a few inches of steel over concrete bases. This was the first time an allied force had been through here since the withdrawal of the French many years before.

Some of the difficulties of field operations can be gathered by tracing Chaplain Scanlon's experience on Operation Virginia. The enemy was not only ambushes, mortars, or fire-fights, but also fatigue and exhaustion. Chaplain Scanlon continued:

Since we had expected to arrive at dawn for our provisions, many of us had no food. I for one. It was oppressively hot once the sun got up in the sky, and along about mid-afternoon the sun began to take its toll. I realized I was starting to fade. I remember trying to go up a hill. The next thing I knew I was at the side of the path with a blanket over my head to shade me from the sun, and Corpsman Blaze, a Jewish lad from "A" Co. 1/1 was saying, "Take a little of this, sir, and take deep breaths." What a feeling. This was my first experience with heat exhaustion.

After a while the Marines helped me down to the stream bed and in I went, clothes and all. One of our Lieutenants said to me later that those were the worst few minutes he had had in Vietnam. We were apprehensive of fire from the opposite bank but got out without difficulty. I remember that the men treated me like the most important man in the world, the same sensation I am sure all of our injured and ill have experienced. I was returned to Khe Sanh by chopper and was evacuated to "A" Med at Phu Bai. Those of us who came in from Khe Sanh drank freezing cold soda like there was no tomorrow. During these days I prayed for our men still on the operation.⁷

Happily, the battalion came through the entire march with no battle casualties.

NSA and MCB Chaplains at Da Nang

Although small in size, the Naval Support Activity in Da Nang occupied an enormously important place in Lieutenant General Walt's conduct of I Corps operations. The III MAF chaplain, Captain Garrett, clearly recognized the importance of NSA and the work of its chaplains. Chaplain Garrett was both the senior Chaplain Corps officer in ICTZ and the organizational supervisor for all Navy chaplains. Under one of the five hats he wore, General Walt was designated Naval Component Commander which placed all Navy activities directly under his command until March of 1966, and his force chaplain was responsible for supervision of chaplains attached to Navy units. In that capacity Chaplain Garrett was deeply interested in the work of NSA

chaplains and was concerned that their ministry should meet with the same degree of success enjoyed by Marine and Seabee chaplains.

In a speech before the Chaplains School Class in November 1966 Chaplain Garrett discussed the work of the NSA Chaplains. Logistic problems, he recalled, were exceedingly grave in I Corps during late 1965 and early 1966. The most obvious reason for the problems was to be found in the nature of Da Nang as a seaport. It was picturesque and beautiful, but it was shallow. Deep water stopped two miles out from the coastline. Cargo ships were forced to remain at anchor and unload their cargoes onto lighters which in turn moved the cargo ashore. The labor for unloading the ships and the lighters was provided by NSA personnel organized into hatch gangs. Work routines were uncomplicated. Each hatch gang worked 12 hours on and 12 hours off, 7 days a week, 31 days a month. Chaplain Garrett said that, to his personal knowledge, NSA hatch gangs operated in this manner for three months without the loss of a single day. He noted that active combat operations have within them a sort of psychic income from which the troops can draw a sense of satisfaction, but that the work of the hatch gang provided little sense of accomplishment or satisfaction. He said that he asked Chaplain Gibbons how the men of NSA could continue such a pace, apparently doing the backbreaking work with great enthusiasm, and maintain a phenomenally high level of morale. Chaplain Gibbons responded with the statement, that most of NSA personnel found themselves reinforced by the knowledge that Marines ashore are deeply dependent upon the supplies and equipment made available to them by the hatch gangs. When someone on a hatch gang failed in the performance of his duty, some Marine was more likely to be killed. Chaplain Garrett said that the morale of NSA personnel remained as high as Marine Corps morale even as harbor operations mounted steadily and measurement tonnage unloaded increased to seven, eight, and nine thousand tons a day. Fortunately, and the credit being solely due to Seabee units, one deep water pier was operating and several LST ramps were in full operation before the fall of 1966.

Two long-awaited and badly needed chaplains to man the recently opened Naval Support Activity Hospital at Da Nang arrived in March. In addition, a relief for Chaplain Hunsicker, forced to return home due to the death of a son, arrived to assist Senior

Chaplain Gibbons. First to report was Lieutenant Commander Herman F. Wendler (United Methodist) who arrived on 3 March. He was the second former Operation Shufly chaplain to return to Da Nang for duty, the first being Lieutenant Commander William H. Gibson (Roman Catholic) then serving with FLSG-A near the airstrip. Chaplain Wendler had served seven months at Da Nang in 1963. Coupled with the 15-month tour of NSA he was now beginning, his tenure in Da Nang was to establish a long-standing record for Navy Chaplains in Vietnam at 22 months.

Chaplain Wendler was assigned to provide a religious ministry for Navy personnel at Camp Tien Sha, the main billeting area for NSA personnel, where Chaplain Gibson had moved in December. The two chaplains served more than 4,500 men who by 1 March were attached to NSA Da Nang and lived in Tien Sha or on board barrack ships. On 9 March Lieutenant Commander George E. Paulson (American Baptist) reported for duty as the Protestant hospital chaplain, relieving temporarily assigned Chaplain Christmann of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing who then proceeded to Iwakuni, Japan for duty with MAG-13. On 15 March the second hospital chaplain, Lieutenant Alfred S. Pepera (Roman Catholic) reported for duty, relieving Chaplain Gibbons who had been held close to the hospital for his entire tour with the command.

Chaplain Pepera reported that the hospital chapel, a quonset hut, was nearing completion upon his arrival. It was located at the extreme end of the hospital compound thought later to be a very impractical location for the patients as well as the doctors and corpsmen. Until the chapel was completed church services were held in the mass casualty area. It can be imagined what consternation was caused when a helicopter came in and set down on a sandy and dusty landing pad to discharge wounded Marines during church services.

Patients not being able to get to the chapel on their own had to be transported. They found it difficult to attend weekly Mass or worship services, and the distance from the casualty area kept the doctors and corpsmen away from church since they were required to stand watch in the casualty area. After several months, having convinced the commanding officer that the ministry was suffering, the chapel was relocated to a position where patients could very



Cdr W. W. DeGroot III, Commanding Officer of Mobile Construction Battalion 58, cuts the ribbon for the 1967 opening of new duplex homes built in the hamlet of Phuoc Quang by the Vietnamese with assistance from the Seabees after a fire left many people homeless. Chaplain R. E. Blade, Civic Action Officer of MCB-58, is in the background.

easily get to it and the hospital staff could still be available for emergencies.

Arriving in Da Nang in February and March were two construction battalion chaplains to join the roster of Navy chaplains in Quang Nam Province. The first was Lieutenant Thomas A. Saygers (United Methodist) who arrived with MCB-11. MCB-11 replaced MCB-9, which had been at Camp Adenir since June 1965. The second was Lieutenant French M. Gothard (United Methodist) of MCB-1, who moved into Da Nang's Camp Haskins I, north of Da Nang.

MCB-11 was at Camp Kinser, Okinawa, when Chaplain Saygers joined the unit the previous July. Returning to the United States in September 1965 the battalion began preparing for an early redeployment to Vietnam. After five months of intensive military and technical training, on 1 February 1966 the battalion flew to Da Nang. Construction projects

for which the battalion was responsible included those on which MCB-9 was working: facilities for the Support Activity Hospital; a road on Monkey Mountain; petroleum, oil, and lubricants storage for MAG-16; a Marble Mountain cantonment for the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines; and miscellaneous smaller projects.

Chaplain Saygers was heavily involved in civic action projects. It appeared obvious to the skilled Seabee technicians that their most effective contribution toward the success of American/South Vietnamese joint efforts toward pacification and ultimately winning the peace, lay in establishing a will for achievement in the minds of the Vietnamese with whom they had routine contact. Seabees were especially gifted for this kind of intercultural activity because of the constructive skills they possessed, which were as profitably employed in civilian projects for the Vietnamese as they were in military construction.

Administrative Adjustments

The arrival of Lieutenant Robert F. Wood (Latter Day Saints) occasioned important personnel changes at Da Nang during the first months of 1966. Supporting battalions were usually located in a single compound. This provided the chaplain attached to such support units with greater ease of coverage of his own units and those not having their own chaplain. Since Chaplain Wood was expected to cover an extensive area of the I Corps as the only Latter Day Saint chaplain, he was attached to 9th Motor Transport Battalion. This gave him unit stability and also transportation opportunities.

In addition to the interdenominational services he supplied his unit, Chaplain Wood was personally innovative in important areas. He reported:

To assist the troops at 9th Motors, I established classes in French and Spanish languages, which I offered to anyone who might be interested, and as the battalion Civil Affairs officer, I became involved in the battalion's plan to build a well and a school for a nearby village. Frequent visits with corpsmen to that village also enhanced my rapport with the native populace, and my understanding of the people. From the beginning, I made an attempt to learn and speak the language of the Vietnamese. As I practiced it with them, rapport became much warmer, and my own interest in the presentation of lectures to the troops on the religions of South Vietnam was increased a great deal.⁸

In keeping with the division's desire to provide a broad denominational base for religious coverage, division Chaplain Morton decided that Chaplain Wood's services as an LDS chaplain would be employed more effectively if he were to have more ready access to all LDS personnel in I corps, and that could be accomplished if he were to travel the three enclaves with Orthodox Chaplain Radasky, Christian Scientist Chaplain Hodges, and Jewish Chaplain Reiner. On 27 March, Chaplain Morton reassigned Chaplain Wood to Force Logistics Support Group Alpha, which he envisioned as a second pool for denominational chaplains. Chaplain Hodges was already attached to FLSG-A. With the addition of Chaplain Wood, a pool of denominational representatives similar to that of the division headquarters was established. After approximately a month in the new unit, Chaplain Wood began a series of trips to Chu Lai and Phu Bai to provide denominational coverage for LDS personnel in those enclaves as a normal practice, logging hundreds of hours traveling in jeeps, trucks, helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, buses, and on foot.

In his quarterly report for the period, Chaplain Reiner provided a brief description of his travels about the three enclaves to minister to Jewish personnel. He recorded:

I served as the circuit riding Jewish chaplain covering three Marine enclaves (Da Nang, Chu Lai, Phu Bai), officiating at six to nine daily and Sabbath services per week at six different locations. I provided Jewish religious services for the Jewish personnel at the Naval Support Activity and on the ships in the Da Nang harbor. I visited Jewish personnel aboard the hospital ship USS *Repose* (AH 16) and conducted religious services there.⁹

Chaplain Reiner's activities were duplicated by every chaplain who was attached to one of the two division pools for denominational coverage. Chaplains Hodges and Wood with FLSG-A and Chaplains Radasky, Reiner, MacLean, and Lionberger at division headquarters provided Christian Science, LDS, Orthodox, Jewish, Episcopalian, and Lutheran services respectively. The larger proportion of chaplains attached to the more numerous line battalions were representatives of the major religious bodies of America.

Operations during February, contributed to the extraordinary workload. Chaplain Lionberger, the assistant division chaplain, reported that during February alone, while other chaplains of the office were away on Operation Double Eagle, he conducted nine administrative inspections of various 3d Marine Division units. He reconciled his activities in a final report:

I represented the Division Chaplain on the Division Inspector's staff. This gave me the opportunity to visit the chaplains and their Commanding Officers in the field. I was able to visit the Phu Bai enclave while inspecting 2d Battalion, 1st Marines and observed a new program, the Combined Action Company, operating in the hamlets. One day a rush call came from the Commanding Officer of the 7th Marines at Chu Lai. "Send me an Episcopal Chaplain. General Krulak (FMFPac) is coming and my chaplain is on Okinawa!" Since the Division Chaplain was on Double Eagle, and P. D. MacLean had not yet reported to headquarters from 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, Chaplain Maguire decided that I should go. This gave me the opportunity to visit the Chu Lai enclave as well as visiting other Division Chaplains. It had to happen this way; Sunday morning the General did not show.¹⁰

Near the first of April, Chaplain Morton was offered new office spaces by the division chief of staff. Two quonset huts were assigned the division chaplain and the headquarters chaplains made their

second move in less than five months. Although it was not apparent at the time, such moves were to become even more frequent in the coming months. It seemed to be the story of the Marine chaplain's life; settle in and prepare to move. Nevertheless Chaplains Morton, Maguire, Lionberger, and MacLean made the move this time as if it were a permanent and final arrangement. One of the spacious quonsets was used for office space for Chaplains Morton, Maguire, and Lionberger. The other was used as office space for Chaplains Reiner and MacLean with a section reserved as a division chaplain's storeroom. Happily by late April ecclesiastical equipment and supplies had ceased to be a problem. The 3d Force Service Regiment (FSR) on Okinawa, and the Force Logistics Support Groups A and B at Da Nang and Chu Lai respectively, maintained a steady flow of equipment to meet the needs of expanding division and wing activities.

III MAF Chaplain Garrett later remarked that Chaplain Morton was, "the best supply man in the Corps. His store room showed it. The condition of equipment in use by chaplains and the state of chaplain consumable supplies confirmed it. Chaplain Morton had a talent for internal organization and chaplain-supply that I have never seen equaled anywhere."¹¹

Another of Chaplain Morton's interests in the pre-Easter period of 1966 was related to the construction of a 3d Marine Division chapel in the vicinity of division headquarters. He selected a site on what he later named "Cathedral Hill" and approached the commanding general for approval of the site and tentative construction plans. The general voiced enthusiastic support and approved the division chaplain's proposals.

The projected 3d Marine Division Chapel, to be named "Chapel of the Abiding Presence" was to be an area chapel designed to meet the worship needs of a number of adjacent units. Characteristic of their leadership, Chaplains Morton and Garrett formulated policy guidelines for chapel construction which were intended to make the best use of available worship facilities. Two types of chapels were considered essential to guidelines objectives. First were the area chapels, buildings erected between two or more unit campsites to serve the needs of adjacent units. The second type consisted of unit chapels, construction by individual battalions which were physically isolated from other units. The first

area chapel was that constructed for use of the 7th Engineers and 1st Battalion, 3d Marines and was dedicated by Chief of Chaplains, Rear Admiral James W. Kelly, during his Christmas visit in 1965.

Groundbreaking for the second area chapel, for the use of the 3d Division AmTrac, Tank, Anti-Tank, and Motor Transport Battalions, occurred on the same day. The third chapel to be planned and constructed as an area chapel was the division's own, "Chapel of the Abiding Presence" on Cathedral Hill. Located as it was on a choice piece of real estate with a splendid view of the area, the Cathedral Hill construction site was in great demand by adjacent units. The commanding officer of the 12th Marines, knowing nothing of Chaplain Morton's previous conversation with the commanding general, expressed his intention to use the site for projected expansion of his regimental CP. Chaplain Morton informed him of his intended use of the hill for a new chapel. To end the matter once and for all the colonel remarked to Chaplain Morton, "Chaplain, I wouldn't want to have to bring this matter to the attention of the Commanding General." Chaplain Morton's quiet response, was classic. In soft tones he said, "No, Colonel, you sure wouldn't." He didn't.¹²

In the weeks following, firm plans were projected and materials for a large V-shaped structure were acquired. Chaplain Morton took time to describe the building:

The chancel is in the north apex of the V-shaped structure. A common sacristy and confessional borders one end. The roof is fiberglass plastic composition, structured with 12 x 12 rejected bunker timbers. The timbers are seven feet apart. The entrance is at the inside of the V. The chapel will seat 250 persons. The Blessed Sacrament Chapel is diamond-shaped and will seat 35 to 55 persons. The all-purpose chapel is octagonal, and will seat the same number as the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. This complex may have three services at one time. The chapels could serve as a retreat center accommodating four groups. The complex is near housing and messing facilities and is adjacent to the Division Chaplain's quonset hut office.¹³

1st Marine Division Arrives at Chu Lai

The most significant organizational evolution to occur during the first four months of 1966 was the arrival of the 1st Marine Division (Reinforced) in Vietnam. For several years the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, California had been configured as the reserve-back up division in support of the mobile, combat-ready, 3d Marine Division on

Okinawa and Hawaii. When the 3d Marine Division was committed to combat in Vietnam, and moved its forward elements, its main body, and finally its rear detachments in country, the 1st Marine Division was making preparations to deploy to Okinawa to replace the 3d Division and to stand in reserve ready to support it as required. In August 1965 the 1st Marine Division (Forward) deployed to Okinawa, with 1st Marine Division (Rear) following the first week in March 1966.

During the entire course of the year, from March 1965 to March 1966, the 1st Marine Division Chaplain, Captain John L. Wissing (Roman Catholic) had been preparing battalion chaplains for deployment to Vietnam. The final (37th) transplacement battalion, the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines with Lieutenant Curtis W. Brannon (Southern Baptist)

attached, sailed for Vietnam to become 1st Battalion, 3d Marines of the 3d Marine Division in August. The 7th Marines, maintaining its identity as a 1st Marine Division unit but being assigned to the 3d Marine Division had already deployed in May of 1965 and had landed segments in June and July at Chu Lai and Qui Nhon. The 1st Marines had deployed in August, the Regimental Command Group and 3d Battalion, 1st Marines remaining on Okinawa while the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines moved to Da Nang and 2d Battalion, 1st Marines assumed duties as the Special Landing Force embarked in the Amphibious Ready Group. In August, the 7th Engineer Battalion was assigned to the 3d Marine Division at Da Nang. The 1st Marine Division (Rear) deployed from Camp Pendleton on 11 February and arrived on Okinawa approximately one month

The new 1st Marine Division chapel is dedicated on Memorial Day 1966, with the division commander, MajGen Lewis J. Fields, and his senior staff members in attendance.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A369171



before the division was scheduled to be committed to duty in Vietnam. Between 15 December and 15 March, the 5th Marines, which had been depleted through transplacing battalions shortly before the division deployed to Okinawa, was remanned and designated Regimental Landing Team 5.

On 27 March 1966, the 1st Marine Division, less RLT-5, which remained on Okinawa, arrived at Chu Lai and joined III MAF. Responsibility for security of the Chu Lai Combat Base and Tactical Area of Operational Responsibility surrounding the base itself was relinquished by the 3d Marine Division and was reassigned to the 1st Marine Division. First Marine Division units in Chu Lai reverted to administrative and operational control of their parent organization and 3d Marine Division units in the area, for the first time, came under operational control of the 1st Marine Division.

From the point of view of chaplains in the enclave the transition was a smooth one. Chaplains Kinderer and Loeffler of the 1st Marines readressed their official reports to Chaplain Wissing. Chaplains Goad, Usenza, Hiskett, and Epps of the 7th Marines and Chaplains Malliett and Blank of the 11th Marines were returned to control of the 1st Marine Division.

Only for Chaplains Stewart, Usenza, and Epps did this mean an official change of orders from one command to another. Chaplains Howard and Daly of MAG-36, Chaplains Taylor and Abel of MAG-12, and MCB Chaplains Haney and Hunkins continued to report to wing and construction regiment respectively, but coordinated their religious coverage of area positions with Division Chaplain Wissing.

Third Marine Division Chaplains Kenny and Ahrensbrak, attached to B Med Field Hospital, were returned to Chaplain Morton for reassignment, and the 1st Medical Battalion, with newly reassigned chaplains, Lieutenant Dudley C. Hathaway (Nazarene) and Lieutenant Brian E. Kane (Roman Catholic) attached, assumed responsibility for a distinguished hospital ministry to the ill and wounded Marines in the Chu Lai enclave.

On 31 March, Chaplains Garrett of III MAF and Morton of 3d Division visited Chaplain Wissing's office and participated in a senior chaplains' conference. The division chaplains and MAF chaplain conferred at length about inter-division chaplains' relation and about administrative matters confronting their units.

In a letter to FMFPac Force Chaplain Craven of 25 May 1966, Chaplain Wissing said:

On 31 March, Chaplains Garrett, Morton and myself met at Chu Lai to discuss chaplain personnel. At that time it was known that Chaplains Usenza, Goad and Hiskett were to be detached in May. We agreed that in order to meet minimal needs of the First Marine Division, and at the same time to temporarily assist the Third Marine Division in their shortage of chaplains, Usenza would be relieved by a Catholic Chaplain; Goad and Hiskett would be relieved by one Protestant Chaplain from those ordered in to the Third Marine Division at that time.¹⁴

FMFPac ordered chaplains Lieutenant Vincent R. Capodanno (Roman Catholic) and Lieutenant Stanley J. Beach (General Association of Regular Baptists) to the 1st Marine Division as a result of that agreement and III MAF's request. Chaplain Capodanno reported on 30 April. Chaplain Beach's orders were cancelled at the request of III MAF, since he had already been assigned in the 3d Division. The division was given assurance that another Protestant would be ordered to them in lieu of Chaplain Beach. Chaplain Wissing wrote:

On this date, at a meeting in Da Nang with Garrett and Morton, I was informed that because of their shortage a Protestant Chaplain would not be ordered from the 3d to the 1st Division. Thus my dispatch requesting a Protestant Chaplain from 3d FSR was sent out. This Protestant Chaplain is required to fill a minimum need, especially with Stewart gone to FLSG. If the above request is granted I still required one more Protestant Chaplain to fill my T/O of 23 chaplains.¹⁵

It was readily apparent that 1st Marine Division Chaplain Wissing was undergoing the same trauma experienced by Chaplains O'Connor and Jones in the early days of the buildup of forces. Chaplain Wissing adopted as a minimum requirement that every 1st Marine Division unit in the country have the benefit of religious coverage of Protestant and Roman Catholic chaplains.

Still, in a letter to the Chief of Chaplains, Chaplain Wissing stated:

I will be forever grateful to the Chief of Chaplains for this assignment It has been the most challenging, exciting, rewarding, satisfying, memorable and enjoyable experience of my years in the ministry, both as civilian priest and as a military chaplain. If I would choose one word as being descriptive of the best of this period I would use the word "cooperation" The cooperation of the Staff Chaplain, Headquarters Marine Corps and the Chaplains Division of the Bureau of Naval Personnel in their prompt

answers to appeals for chaplains on very short notice was most gratifying.¹⁶

Administrative control of all 1st Marine Division chaplains reverted to Chaplain Wissing on 1 May. This meant that he was responsible for effecting such liaison with III MAF, FMFPac, and the Chief of Chaplains in Washington that his roster would remain filled at all times. He was responsible for supplying chaplains and reliefs as required for all 1st Marine Division chaplain billets in Vietnam although a substantial number of his chaplains were under the operational control of, and reported to, Chaplain Morton in the 3d Marine Division. The control situation was to become reciprocal in the fall of 1966 when a number of 3d Marine Division battalions were shifted temporarily to the 1st Division. But for the 1st Division's first six months in country, in effect Chaplain Wissing and his relief, Captain David J. Casazza (Roman Catholic), supplied the chaplains and Chaplain Morton kept them busy.

Immediately upon landing in country and surveying the chaplains' coverage of Chu Lai-based personnel, Chaplain Wissing became aware of the need for a number of additional changes in assignments. Combat operations had not slowed to permit a formal reception of the new arrivals. Chaplains Usenza and Hiskett of 1st Battalion, 7th Marines and 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, respectively, left Chu Lai on Operation Indiana (28-30 March) the day after Chaplain Wissing arrived. It also became apparent that two chaplains would have to be assigned immediately to the 1st Medical Battalion to replace 3d Marine Division Chaplains Kenny and Ahrensbrak who were returning with Company B, 3d Medical Battalion, to Da Nang. Chaplains Hathaway and Kane were assigned to cover a new 1st Medical Battalion Aid Station as part of the transition in anticipation of B Med's departure.

Lieutenant Edward Kane (Roman Catholic) was assigned to the 1st Marines. At this time the regiment was without a Catholic chaplain; Chaplain Kane was therefore assigned as assistant regimental chaplain to provide for the deficiency in coverage.

As was anticipated, the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines left Chu Lai almost immediately to rejoin the 4th Marines at Phu Bai. Chaplain Wissing had formulated policy decisions affecting the assignment of chaplains several months before on Okinawa. He was determined to provide adequate Protestant and Roman Catholic coverage for every unit. In so far as

possible, regiments were to have two Protestant and two Catholic Chaplains.

Chaplain Wissing was unable to implement other desired but not essential policies with regard to coverage. For instance, the matter of relieving chaplains after six months with a line battalion or medical unit simply took secondary precedence. Facing him in the immediate future was the prospect of relieving every chaplain in the 7th Marines, all of whom were due for rotation to the United States in May. With no prospect for new chaplains to arrive until July, Chaplain Wissing simply had to defer action on desirable policy implementation until sufficient chaplains were available, and marshal his resources to meet requirements which were to present themselves for resolution in the immediate future.

Problems with personnel changes in Chu Lai in May and June 1966 also occupied great amounts of the 1st Marine Division Chaplain's planning time. Since Chaplain Wissing could expect no new arrivals from the United States during May and June, it became necessary to fill the vacancies with chaplains already on board. Chaplains Goad with the 7th Marines; Chaplain Usenza with 1st Battalion, 7th Marines; and Chaplain Hiskett with 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, were detached in May. It was necessary to move Chaplain Baxter from 1st Motor Transport Battalion (leaving the latter position vacant) as a replacement for Chaplain Goad. Chaplain Capodanno was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines as a numerical and denominational relief for Chaplain Usenza. Lieutenant Paul W. Pearson (United Methodist) was assigned to the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines as a relief for Chaplain Hiskett. Chaplain Epps in the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines was to remain on board until detached on 1 August. Chaplain W. C. L. Asher reported on 30 June for assignment to 1st Motor Transport Battalion.

Chaplains Goad, Hiskett, McNamara, and Betters who had preceded Chaplains Usenza and Epps in the 7th Marines, had experienced some of the most intense combat to take place in Vietnam during the first 15 months of the buildup of forces. The series of search and destroy missions at Chu Lai and the perimeter security activity at Qhi Nhon had been combat of the type which sapped the energy of the unit chaplains and left them virtually exhausted after a year of effort. Chaplain Goad had described his regiment's mission as one of search and destroy.

The regiment participated in 10 combat missions while he was attached for duty. However, the picture began to change in the late spring of 1966. "Shortly before departure," Chaplain Goad said, "the mission of the regiment began gradually to change from search and destroy to security and holding."¹⁷ Chaplain Goad then addressed himself to the attitude and approach he thought a newly arriving chaplain should cultivate before entering Vietnam. In so doing he mirrored the general mood of chaplains up to mid-1966. Chaplain Goad explained:

The chaplain must understand as thoroughly as possible why we are in Vietnam. He should be totally and personally committed to this aspect of our foreign policy. This commitment must go deeper than mere compliance with military orders; that is to say, just because it is his duty. The chaplain's personal motivation, and the motivation which he attempts to inspire in his men, will be greatly enhanced by a deep and honest commitment to the value and desirability of our mission in Southeast Asia.¹⁸

It can be safely said that Navy chaplains in Vietnam, without a known exception at this time, were fully supportive of the American effort in South Vietnam and its underlying philosophy. As opposition to the war was developing in the United States, combat-committed chaplains remained firmly in support of U.S. policy. Being on the scene they shared the enlisted Marine's viewpoint. They could see for themselves what the Viet Cong were attempting to do by terror and atrocity and utter disregard for life. Such visible evidences of the need for American forces to be in Vietnam being readily apparent, it was difficult for troops in Vietnam, and the chaplains who accompanied them, to understand the opposition which they heard was developing at home. There was a tendency to dismiss the demonstrations in the United States as being perpetrated by the uninformed who themselves wished to avoid personal involvement in the cause of freedom for the South Vietnamese people.

As early as mid-1966, as opposition to the war developed, Chief of Chaplains James W. Kelly made it known to members of his staff that any chaplain who was unable, in conscience, to approve or participate in the war in Vietnam would be given another assignment. Any chaplain who, after being committed to combat in Southeast Asia, asked to be relieved on the basis of opposition to the war would be immediately reassigned. No such requests were received and not a single voice of dissent among the

highly motivated Navy chaplains in Vietnam was heard during the buildup of forces.

*1st Marine Aircraft Wing Chaplains,
January-April 1966*

Eight chaplains were expected to report for duty with the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing during the first three months of 1966. An equal number was to be detached. The total effect of these changes, coupled with the three arrivals during the last months of 1965, was that almost a complete turnover of wing chaplains had occurred. Four detachments and one arrival occurred in January 1966. Chaplains Toland and Tipton of MAG-16 were relieved by Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Donald T. McGrogan (Roman Catholic) and Lieutenant Commander William W. Bartlett (United Church of Christ), who were detached on 3 January. At Chu Lai Chaplain Long of MAG-36, relieved by Lieutenant John R. Daly (Roman Catholic), who had been reassigned from duty with HMM-163 in Qui Nhon, was detached on 11 January. On the same day Lieutenant Commander William J. Wright (American Baptist) reported to Chaplain Bakker for duty as assistant wing chaplain. Chaplain Wright arrived from El Toro, California, where he had been attached to the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing. He assumed the administrative duties in the wing chaplain's office which had been handled by Chaplain Bakker with the assistance of MWHG-1 Chaplain Richards. In February Lieutenant Commander Harold L. Christmann (Assemblies of God), who reported to Chaplain Bakker, was slated for further assignment to Iwakuni. It was intended that he would be a relief for Chaplain Smith in MAG-13. Chaplain Smith, however, was not due for detachment until late March and the NSA Chaplain had indicated that a critical need for chaplains existed at the newly opened Naval Hospital, Da Nang. Chaplain Christmann was therefore assigned temporary duty at the nearby hospital for a period of a month until NSA chaplains arrived in March to fill the newly established billets. He remained at the hospital for five weeks before reporting to MAG-13 as Chaplain Smith's relief.

Lieutenant Ray W. Fullilove (Southern Baptist) and Lieutenant Kenneth B. Abel (United Presbyterian) reporting in February were added to the rosters of other enclaves: Chaplain Fullilove was assigned to MAG-16 in the expectation that, after a period of indoctrination, he would go to Phu Bai for service with HMM-163 of MAG-16 which had been

without the services of a wing chaplain. Near the close of his tour with the wing in late February, Lieutenant Thomas J. Dillon (Roman Catholic) of MAG-11 was given three weeks duty with HMM-163 but returned to Da Nang in mid-March in time for his own detachment. Chaplain Abel, arriving on 17 February was ordered to duty in Chu Lai as Chaplain Reiter's relief in MAG-12.

Lieutenant Richard T. McCue (Roman Catholic), reporting for duty with the wing on 5 February, was ordered to MWHG-1 where he was to give Catholic coverage for the following six weeks. He then relieved Chaplain Dillon as the Catholic chaplain of MAG-11 when he later was detached on 23 March.

The final chaplain-personnel change of the quarter represented the most significant of all the changes because it occurred in the wing chaplain's billet. Commander Paul C. Hammerl (Roman Catholic) reported on 9 March for duty as Wing Chaplain in relief of Chaplain Bakker, detached on

14 March. Chaplain personnel structures thereafter were to remain stable for the next six months.

Relinquishing the leadership of wing chaplains to Chaplain Hammerl, Chaplain Bakker remarked, "Chaplain Hammerl arrived 9 March to take over as the new wing chaplain. The Wing will have passed from Paul (Bradley) to Peter (Bakker) and back again to Paul (Hammerl)."¹⁹ Chaplain Bakker had relieved Commander Paul F. Bradley (Roman Catholic) as wing chaplain at Iwakuni on 24 March 1965.

Apart from the official reports of activities during the period, prepared by Chaplains Hammerl and Wright, the most comprehensive account of wing chaplains' work was provided by Chaplain Bartlett of MAG-16. He reported:

This period of the first few months was a very busy time from the religious point of view. There was an overall shortage of chaplains and we were travelling quite a bit. I was handling services at MAG-16, covering the hospital, having services at Camp Tien Sha and "B" Battery LAAMS on

Chaplain Earl L. Boyette serves Communion to men of the 7th Marines during 1969.

Photo courtesy of Chaplain Earl L. Boyette





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A191358

Chaplain Paul J. Antos holds Mass for men of 2d Battalion, 4th Marines during 1968.

Monkey Mountain. Gradually as more chaplains arrived in the area these outside duties were reduced. During the late spring and summer there was a series of services on Navy ships in the harbor to help out with coverage there. But, in general, from late spring on, I could confine my work to the rapidly growing aircraft group at Marble Mountain Air Facility.²⁰

The sacrament of Holy Communion was the sacrament most offered to Marines as a strengthening factor of the faith, yet at times Holy Baptism was administered to the same purpose. Chaplain Bartlett remembered:

The location of our base on China Beach was ideal for services of baptism. In February I assisted Wing Chaplain Peter Bakker with the baptism of a man from my group. The same day he baptized many children from the Protestant orphanage. In March Chaplain Christmann used our beach for four baptisms. Later that month I baptised a

man at our beach. It was a somewhat unusual service in that just as we were about to begin the ritual we were both sent head over heels by a large wave that neither of us saw as our backs were towards it. A new Christian got a double baptism that day, both times by immersion.²¹

The first Sunday in April saw MAG-16 in new quarters for its services. Up to this time they had held forth in the messhall, which was most unsatisfactory. Now Chaplain Bartlett had permission to use the officers' shower building. It had been finished but inoperative since late 1965. Permission for its use had been previously denied. The chaplain and men from the group were able to fix the building into an attractive little chapel. Attendance increased quickly by 30 percent. A small lounge was set up in the back with devotional materials, floor lamps, and easy chairs. This and the chapel itself



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A185674

A Marine from the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, is baptized by a 2d Battalion chaplain at the An Tan Bridge, Chu Lai. The Marine on guard is a member of the 1st Battalion.

were both used and appreciated; many men used it as a quiet place to cut tapes to send home. Most important of all, there was now a place that was worship-suitable, for meditation and prayer at any time of the day or night, something that is very important in a combat situation.

Civic action activity represented an equally time-consuming function for chaplains of the wing. Their efforts were a study in coordination. Chaplain Daly (MAG-36) accompanied one of his squadron flight surgeons to the island of Cu Lao Re, 20 miles southeast of Chu Lai to investigate the needs of the 8,000 Vietnamese there. Assistance in the form of medical care, food to vary the diet of the isolated people, and materials for agricultural advancement was given by the group and subsequent Chu Lai military units. Chaplain Rieter (MAG-12) accompanied the MAG-12 MedCAP team to the village of

Tich Tay where he assisted in administering medications, while Chaplain Taylor held mass for the villagers of Ky Hoa, and Chaplain Richards visited the Evangelical Protestant Church of Hai Chau and the Sacred Heart Orphanage with an eye toward future civic action efforts. Chaplain Threadgill (MAG-11) subsequently delivered 660 pounds of frozen fish to the Sacred Heart Orphanage; 348 health kits, 6 boxes of clothing and sewing materials to the Christian Missionary Alliance Compound in Da Nang; and one load of scrap lumber to the compound for five Vietnamese retired pastors and families. He also visited the ARVN hospital with missionaries from Da Nang. Finally, Chaplains Bakker and Wright delivered 6 cases of candy, 3 boxes of clothing, 100 health kits, a box of yarn, and 80 bars of soap to the Tin Lanh Church in Da Nang.

During the week of 13 April, civic action was



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A188646

Southern Baptist Chaplain Harry T. Jones of the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines baptizes three Americans, two Marines, and an airman, in the Seng Bo Dien River in May 1967.

sharply curtailed as I Corps erupted in Buddhist demonstrations against the central government. During this week Chaplain Hammerl reported only two chaplains as having any contact with the Vietnamese villages and even those were very limited. Civic action came to a virtual standstill.

The Buddhist Revolt

A few weeks before Holy Week 1966, political unrest in the area created an explosive situation which resulted in the evacuation of civilian personnel from Da Nang and Hue and from the surrounding provincial countryside. Chaplain Wendler wrote:

It was while I was at Camp Tien Sha that Premier Ky ordered his Marines to enter Da Nang to stop a rebellion of the "Struggle Forces" which was composed primarily of Buddhist factions in support of General Thi. During Holy Week, Hue was evacuated and . . . civilian personnel were brought to Camp Tien Sha. This evacuation took place on Wednesday and included forty-two men, women, and children. On Saturday of the same week approximately 400-500 persons, military and civilian, were evacuated from Da Nang to Camp Tien Sha. This latter group was divided so that all married couples and single girls were

sent to the hospital for billeting. Camp Tien Sha had to take care of the original forty-two and an additional 300-500 civilian evacuees.

Adjustments which had to be made were many. Heads were blocked off for the use of the women; swings, teeter-totters and a swimming pool were constructed for the children to use. Military personnel returned to Da Nang within two weeks. However, because of the political situation in Hue, the missionaries stayed for approximately three to four weeks. By maintaining close contact with the CIC of the Camp, I was abreast of events and strategy at all times and was able to keep the missionaries informed.²²

The evacuees were transported from Hue to MAG-16 by air and then moved by bus to Camp Tien Sha. Space was at a premium so Chaplains Bartlett and McGrogan of MAG-16 arranged to have about 30 persons housed in the temporary chapel. Concern about Easter Services was dispelled by the refugees themselves when they made everything ready for services early Easter morning. They then moved back in again after services were finished.

III MAF Chaplain Garrett played an important part in the drama of the Buddhist demonstrations at Da Nang. For four months he had made every effort to include Buddhist organizations among the civic

action projects undertaken in I Corps, and his efforts had not gone unnoticed by the Buddhist leader Thich Min Chieu. As a matter of fact Chaplain Garrett and the Venerable Thich Minh Chieu had become close acquaintances and a degree of trust had developed between them. In support of this developing trust, the story of the Que Bac Pagoda is a fine example. Sniper fire had been received from the Pagoda on Da Nang East and local Marines had proceeded to put a round of artillery directly through it, destroying portions of the walls and the statue of Buddha inside it. The Buddhist leader asked Chaplain Garrett what he could do about restoration of the Pagoda and the sculpted figure it housed. Chaplain Garrett remarked that a realistic way to deal with Christian-Buddhist relations had to be worked out in a hurry. Chapel funds on hand could not be used for the purchase of religious items not intended by the fund's donors. A special appeal for funds, for the purchase of a Buddha, to augment civic action funds which would be employed for restoration of the pagoda, was made with the result that \$600 was collected to meet the special need. A public presentation was arranged with the Mayor of Da Nang, the Commanding Officer of the Naval Hospital, Chaplain Garrett, and local Buddhist leaders attending. The presentation was made, the pagoda was repaired and relations between Chaplain Garrett and the Venerable Thich Minh Chieu were further strengthened.

Two days before the "Struggle Forces" Buddhist demonstrations were to occur, Buddhist leader Chieu dispatched a messenger to Chaplain Garrett to inform him that the Venerable Chieu wished to see him. When Chaplain Garrett arrived at the Buddhist Headquarters in Da Nang, he remembered: "It looked like a large command post during a combat operation. Monks were scurrying in and out and a great deal of seemingly important activity was taking place."²³ Thich Minh Chieu dismissed everyone from the room and spoke privately with Chaplain Garrett. Chaplain Garrett later reported:

He told me that he had called me there as a friend to inform me what was soon to take place. He informed me that the Buddhists intended to raise their flag over Da Nang and Hue in two days and that he expected 80 percent of the First and Second ARVN Divisions to join the struggle forces against Premier Ky's administration. The rebellion was on. It was immediately obvious to me that while our relations had been exceptionally good, the Venerable Chieu was giving me this information as a

means of establishing a direct, but informal and unofficial, pipeline to General Walt. When the brief conference was concluded, I returned to the III MAF Headquarters and informed General Walt what had taken place. He asked me to put the incident in writing, which, with the assistance of his G-2 personnel, I was able to do.²⁴

When the revolt came off as scheduled, rather than the expected 80 percent of the ARVN divisions supporting it, a minimal two percent responded with support. The result was a disaster for the "struggle forces."

Chaplains noted other incidents during the rebellion. Chaplain Witt, with 1st Battalion, 3d Marines on the northern perimeter of the Da Nang combat base, was involved in an incident involving a U.S. Marine and ARVN "Roughrider" truck convoy and a Buddhist demonstration on Highway 1 between Da Nang and Phu Bai. "Roughrider" was the most appropriate code name for convoys of American and Vietnamese vehicles traveling from Da Nang to Hue/Phu Bai or to Chu Lai. A U.S. Marine company rode "shotgun" for 40-50 ARVN supply trucks over the terribly rough roads. During the demonstrations Buddhist altars and tables were placed on the highway. The Marine vehicles leading the convoy carefully inched along through a maze of these altars. At one point the Marine vehicles were stopped by a line of altars that stretched across both lanes and shoulders of the highway. Despite the fact that the spot was a likely location for a VC ambush, the convoy halted. Suddenly from the rear, an ARVN vehicle came up at full speed, which is the only speed they seemed to have, and crashed into the altars, scattering wood and religious symbols to both sides of the road. Even a few careless or slow-footed Buddhist monks were up-ended into a road-side ditch. Once the altars were removed, the convoy proceeded, but the tension increased.

Chaplain Powell reported on a similar incident at Phu Bai. Between Phu Bai and Hue religious altars and demonstrating Vietnamese were posted all along the road. He said:

Moving along that highway our convoy slowly inching its way along the border of the road, our tank treads and heavy truck wheels literally only inches away from the kneeling figures of young boys and girls who unflinchingly held their posts, was a sight that will long remain within me. They succeeded in stopping the operation-bound convoy by barricading the bridge in Hue, so we were forced to return to Phu Bai. But undaunted, as ever, the Marines soon solved that by the famous vertical envelopment tactic with helicopters.²⁵

The demonstrations were to continue for several weeks, into June and early July, affecting the III MAF civic action program among the indigenous people. Chaplain Garrett wrote that he was very much concerned that the demonstrations should not so badly divide the people that all the work done to reduce intercultural suspicion and enhance American-Vietnamese relations in the three enclaves, would count for little or nothing.

This concern was felt elsewhere as well. In a memorandum from the Chief of Chaplains to the Chief of Naval Personnel on the subject of the political situation in Vietnam, the Chief of Chaplains reported one of his chaplains as saying:

When the heavy traffic stopped at Da Nang's only bridge where once the serviceman showered the children with candy, food, etc., there is now a complete lack of attention or even concern shown. There is a pronounced distrust toward the Vietnamese people in general and this distrust will continue at least until the political situation is stabilized. This is the situation in the city! I do not know the reaction of the men in Marine units outside the city, away from the demonstrations. Forced strikes, with threats of violence against those who do not participate, were the order of the day.²⁶

Easter and Passover in I Corps

While the Easter story in I Corps neither began nor ended with the work of Chaplain Dunks of 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, his story and that of the chaplains who cooperated with him to realize an inspirational Easter in his battalion, will convey something of the energy and enthusiasm with which all Navy chaplains in I Corps approached the festival in 1966. Chaplain Dunks reported:

Easter season was approaching and I was discussing plans for divine worship services with my Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel W. Taylor. He expressed the desire that we obtain the help of other chaplains and have an Easter Sunrise Service in each of the rifle companies for both Protestants and Catholics. These companies were scattered in strategic positions, far apart from the battalion command post and far apart from one another. At the time they were taking much of the brunt of enemy contact south of Marble Mountain. I conferred with Chaplain Frank Morton, and we began making arrangements to carry out a plan of comprehensive coverage. The crowded Easter schedules of all chaplains involved were considered, and we were given the benefit of helicopter transportation to expedite our mission. The project was named "Top Sacred Operation Sunrise." Before daybreak on Easter morning Chaplains Maguire, Beach, Glynn, Franklin, Lionberger, Saygers and Pepera came by helicopter and by

road to provide Easter Sunrise Services Protestant and Catholic in every rifle company of 3d Battalion, 9th Marines. Every chaplain was back in Da Nang by 0800, ready to begin their own routines of worship service for Easter. The men of every company turned out en masse. They were amazed that so much attention could be given the battalion and continued to respond with great enthusiasm to the religious program of the battalion through the remainder of my tour of duty. "Top Sacred Operation Sunrise" represented by far the most inspirational and significant event of the last half of my tour in Vietnam.²⁷

Chaplain Morton referred to the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines Easter event as an experiment in saturation. At predawn Easter morning, Chaplains Morton, Maguire, Lionberger, Glynn, and Beach met at C Med and then went on to the 9th Marines to pick up Chaplain Franklin. The 'choppers' dropped off Chaplains Maguire and Beach at Company K; Chaplain Glynn at Company M, where he joined up with Chaplain Dunks who had gone to Company M late Saturday afternoon and remained overnight; and Chaplains Lionberger and Franklin at Company L. Chaplain Pepera came down the road later in the day to Company I to celebrate mass where Chaplain Saygers of MCB-11 held a Sunrise Service after spending the night there. Chaplain Dunks returned to the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines CP to conduct a service at 0930 and Chaplain Franklin made a return trip to that CP at 1330 to celebrate Mass. So the entire battalion received Protestant and Roman Catholic Divine Services on Easter Sunday.

The helicopters were essential in carrying out this operation since the roads in and out of the city of Da Nang were closed due to the political situation. It is possible that Top Sacred Operation Sunrise is a "first" in accomplishing a religious saturation of troops on the line.

Virtually every unit with a chaplain attached had a sunrise worship service in addition to the routine schedule of Sunday services on Easter 1966. Chaplain Bartlett, with MAG-16 wrote:

Easter Sunrise and regular services were never-to-be-forgotten experiences. The early service was held on the beach as I stood on a beached boat, with the people standing or sitting where they wanted. The dawn that morning was perfect. Late Easter afternoon many of us met on the beach again. Our purpose was a memorial service for one of our Corpsmen. He had many friends from many squadrons. The Easter message took on new depth that evening as the sun was setting on our group gathered on the beach.²⁸

In a letter to FMFPac Force Chaplain Craven,

Chaplain Garrett summed up the events of Easter in Da Nang. He wrote:

You are aware of the tensions under which we have existed throughout Holy Week. They cannot be exaggerated. While we are not out of the woods yet by any means, there has been some lessening of these tensions within the past 48 hours. The effect of all this on our Easter plans you can very easily imagine. We decided right from the outset not to let our "big plans" disrupt our regular coverage. In fact these were intensified and as the large combined service became "on again-off again" the wisdom of this approach was verified. Actually, the combined service never was "off." General Walt requested that all VIP visits to III MAF be cancelled except Bishop Mueller's, and that's the way it worked out.²⁹

The Buddhist Revolt was disruptive of all the events of Holy Week and the pressure to cancel the religious observances was reasonably strong. It would have been the logical and easy way out. Chaplain Garrett reported:

By Saturday all travel was long since stopped around Da Nang and I had concluded that even if we held the service out on Hill 327 as anticipated, it would necessarily be poorly attended. But we went right ahead. Bishop Mueller arrived at 0100 Easter Morning and the Service was at 1100. It was a most meaningful spiritual experience. To my genuine amazement we had a fine assembly of Marines. Estimates ranged between 800 and 1000. The 3d Marine Division Band played and one of our new doctors, LCDR Knapp, who has a magnificent baritone voice, sang "The Holy City." Then Bishop Mueller preached a very moving and powerful sermon. All who were present were greatly blessed and we have had many fine comments on the service.³⁰

Equally as important a festival during this season of the year was the Jewish Passover. The Vietnam situation did not stop the Jewish chaplains' plans for a joyous celebration.

The observance of the Passover festival in Da Nang was celebrated in a most eventful manner and under rather unique conditions. A strange blend of joy and sadness surrounded the Seder celebrations—joy because of the opportunity to participate in the traditional Seders, and sadness because of the family separations. The Jewish participants and their guests celebrating the Seders, held at the 3d Marine Division Command Post mess hall in Da Nang, will long remember Passover 1966. It was memorable because it was celebrated in a war zone, in Vietnam, and in an atmosphere filled with ominous clouds of political unrest and turmoil.

With the tense situation caused by the demonstra-

tions and riots in the city of Da Nang the week prior to Passover, and transportation between the city of Da Nang and the U.S. installations in the area almost coming to a standstill, all 90 Seder participants were required to remain overnight in the 3d Marine Division Command Post area. This unexpected turn of events caught many of the men by surprise, and without bedding, clothing, and mess or shaving gear. The men from the Da Nang area had planned to return to their regular billeting areas after the Seder. Men in combat conditions, however, are flexible and learn how to improvise and are accustomed to roughing it. Folding cots were set up in tents and everyone was billeted for the night.

The ban on travel necessitated a change in locations of the Passover morning services which were scheduled in the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing Area. The services were rescheduled in the Division CP Messhall where the Seder had been held the previous night. Chaplain Reiner remembered:

In a sense, it seemed as if the morning services were a continuation of the Passover Seder and that we were following the tradition which the Haggadah recounts about the rabbis at B'nai Brak telling about the departure from Egypt all night until their disciples came to them and said, "Master, the time has come to recite the Shema, the morning prayers."

In some ways the Passover in Da Nang was very similar to the Egyptian Passover; celebrated in a strange and hostile land. To the Jewish servicemen in Vietnam the message of the Passover had a special meaning: the basic struggle for liberty and freedom remained the same, only the time and place changed. To them, human suffering is real whether it be the Vietnamese people crying out against the oppression of the Viet Cong, or the followers of Moses crying to be free from the Egyptians.³¹

The mess sergeant and his staff were unsparing in their efforts to make the ceremonial Seder meals as tasty and as delectable as possible. They were able to prepare under field conditions, a sumptuous four-course meal, "as nice as one would find stateside working with permanent facilities."³² The traditional delicacies of gefilte fish and matzo ball chicken soup were served as the first two courses. The entrees of the main course were turkey, chicken curry, and roast beef au jus. The hot vegetables of beets, string beans, and cauliflower added color to the buffet service tables. When the men approached the buffet tables they were pleasantly surprised to find an entree not listed on the Seder program menu. The mess sergeants had added T-Bone steaks as a special holiday treat. The dessert consisted of kosher (for

Passover) macaroons shipped from the states, sponge cake and tasty fresh fruit compote served in grapefruit shells.

The mess sergeant's fine aesthetic taste in banquet preparation transformed the rather austere mess hall into a banquet hall with a pleasing decor. Partitions divided the mess hall into three sections, the front lounge, the dining area, and the food preparation buffet service area. The partitions were adorned with colorful paintings of Vietnamese rural life. Decorative bomb shells served as the planters for the elephant plant shrubbery in the lounge area. The long picnic style tables and benches usually used in the mess hall were replaced with individual chairs and tables which seated four people. Each table was decorated with a vase of local flowers and greens. The vases were improvised corrugated no. 10 cans which were rather attractive due to their silver color and mirror-like effect which reflected the light. The mess sergeant demonstrated that even under field conditions with a minimum of manpower and equipment, one man with ingenuity and creativity can prepare a most delicious traditional Passover meal in a festive atmosphere.

The guests of honor at the Seder meal included Colonel Leo J. Dulacki, Chief of Staff, 3d Marine Division; Captain Francis L. Garrett, Force Chaplain, III Marine Amphibious Force; and Captain Frank R. Morton, Division Chaplain, 3d Marine Division. Major W. J. Speisel and Gunnery Sergeant Myron E. Goldstein were the senior ranking Jewish officer and SNCO present. General Walt had accepted an invitation to the Seder but due to the highly explosive political situation in downtown Da Nang, was unable to attend. Several unit commanders and executive officers were also present as well as a number of Protestant and Catholic chaplains, including several supervisory chaplains.

At the conclusion of the second Seder, matzos, gefilte fish, chicken dinners, kosher Passover candies, dried fruits, macaroons, personal comfort kits, and copies of the Holy Scriptures and *Jewish Sea Stories* were distributed. The canned kosher foods and matsos were provided by the National Jewish Welfare Board. The Ladies Auxiliary of the Pvt Edward L. Lipsky Post No. 764 of the Jewish War Veterans, Flushing, New York sent the personal comfort kits. The Samuel J. Goldfarb Foundation of Sarasota, Florida contributed the copies of *Jewish*

Sea Stories. The Atlantic Lodge of B'nai Brith, Brooklyn, New York sent packages of dried fruits. Several individuals as well as organizations sent kosher foods and matzos to be distributed.

As part of the ecumenical spirit of the age, the Father Owens Memorial Post No. 1187, Catholic War Veterans, of Newark, New Jersey, sent a large number of Happy Passover greeting cards to be distributed to the Jewish men. These were part of 1,884 cards which were sent by Catholic and Jewish children in Parochial and Jewish day schools in the Newark, New Jersey area. The letter from the Catholic War Veterans Post sent to the Catholic Chaplain read:

Enclosed you will find Easter and Passover Cards from school children. Please distribute the Passover cards to our Jewish brothers or to the Jewish Chaplains. The children sent these messages with love; the notes they wrote are from the heart. We send Passover greetings to our Jewish brothers on their holy day just as God sent his Son to earth; to show us how to live as brothers. The significance of both holy days show that all people should live in peace and freedom.³³

Each of the Passover cards which the Catholic School children sent contained a short personal greeting and letter addressed to a soldier or friend in Vietnam. Many of the children asked that the soldiers write them. The students of the Hillel Academy, Passaic, New Jersey sent hand colored Passover cards. The back cover of the card interestingly read: "Three symbols (Pesach—Passover sacrifice, Matzoh—bread of affliction, Marror—bitter herbs) of man's endurance in the struggle to be free of affliction and oppression."³⁴ The rubber stamp imprint of the Father Owens Memorial Post 1187, Catholic War Veterans appeared below the explanation of the three symbols.

Chaplain Reiner summed up his perception of this experience by saying:

The Passover celebration in Da Nang was unique, historic, festive, and well attended. However, its primary importance was its religious and spiritual character and impact. The Passover festival provided the opportunity for the men to feel a part of the larger world Jewish community and its historical tradition. It was especially meaningful for them to be able to participate in the Passover festival when they are in a strange country, over 8,000 miles from home and families.³⁵

Passover is one of the few opportunities in a combat zone in which Jewish servicemen can join in



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A421523

Holding candles, the children's choir of the Evangelical Protestant Church of Tam Ky and An Tan performs traditional Christmas carols for visiting 1st MAW Marines during dedication ceremonies for the Vietnamese church's new building on 22 December 1966.

prayer and fellowship with a large Jewish congregation. For most Jewish servicemen who are often the only Jewish men in their unit, participation in the Seder celebration is a unique and deeply moving religious experience.

Passover in Vietnam will long be remembered by the chaplains as well as by the men. The presence of so many new faces was a reminder of the continual

challenge to meet and serve all the religious needs of personnel who were widely dispersed in the line and supporting units of the three Marine enclaves and in the many remote outposts in the I Corps area. To meet their spiritual and social needs by helping provide the opportunities for men to identify with their spiritual heritage and community is the essence of the chaplaincy.

CHAPTER 7

Teaching and Preaching (June - September 1966)

Hearts and Minds: The Personal Response Project—Meeting the Needs of Worship

With the expansion of the Vietnam War, the chaplains' role by mid-1966 was also expanded and took on new missions beyond the traditional role of serving the spiritual needs of their assigned units. Chaplains had always preached to the troops from the tenets of the faith they espoused. They also looked beyond the immediate message they were charged with bringing to the service community, to the implications for the social impact it should encourage. Humanitarian activity in the form of assistance to orphanages, hospitals, needy villages, and refugee camps was an obvious and continuous result. Other results were less obvious but perhaps more far-reaching. They involved establishing unique ministries. Chaplains were involved in instructing Marines in the area of drug education as well as moral behavior while away from the command on rest and recreation trips, and they fell very naturally into the role of teacher when consideration of the need to respect the customs and culture of Vietnamese people arose.

The Chaplain Corps of the armed services generally have not undertaken unique ministries. They have usually, and altogether rightfully, reflected the approaches of the civilian community as regards innovation. The pluralistic character of the Chaplain Corps also imposes a caution in beginning unique ministerial efforts. This is generally viewed as a healthy condition but it contributes to a conservative approach to most opportunities. The cross-cultural efforts of the Navy Chaplains Corps in coordination with the Marine Corps in Vietnam runs counter to this tendency. The concentrated study of the Marines' cross-cultural impact undertaken in Vietnam was an experimental ministry and as such was not without its problems. And, although it did not continue past the Vietnam years in the same form, the understanding that the religious message has a broader application than personal soul-saving and life-stabilizing was firmly established in Vietnam

and thereafter vigorously pursued. Programs Navy-wide and uniquely involving the Chaplain Corps a decade later would look to these experimental efforts for their philosophical base and inspiration.

Hearts and Minds: The Personal Response Project

In Vietnam the American military had to recognize a factor in counter-insurgency warfare with which they did not have to cope in more traditional warfare. They had to consider the loyalty of the indigenous population to their government and this meant an understanding of the people's culture, society, and policies. In a word, to succeed they had to help win the people's hearts and minds to the government's cause.

In recent history U.S. forces had either to act as occupying forces, as in Germany after the cessation of hostilities in World War II, or as a peacekeeping force in temporary residence in a host country, such as Korea. And although American troops have traditionally respected the integrity of another culture's values, such sensitivity had been regulated by command as well as courtesy. In those instances the fighting had ceased and attempts to encourage good behavior were not linked to a recognition of its importance in a military situation. American servicemen were asked to be good ambassadors; they had no reason to fear anything more than command dissatisfaction and possible reprisal if their conduct was anything other than impeccable. In Vietnam, however, American military forces faced a situation completely unlike anything they had experienced in their past. There, the references upon which value judgements were made and which in many instances determined behavioral reaction, moved outside the boundaries with which many Americans were familiar. All too often innocent gestures, facial expressions, or outbursts of emotion were misinterpreted. Under circumstances such as these, when un-

conscious behavior resulted in indignation on the part of the Vietnamese because the offender had unknowingly violated a cultural or religious custom, a security threat existed.

The initiative for the development of a unique and important Personal Response project was generated by the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific in 1964, prior to Marine amphibious landings in the Republic of Vietnam. Even before active United States participation in the war, General Krulak recognized that in order to undermine Communism, the confidence of the people was essential. It is to his credit that General Krulak recognized this as the central issue for non-Communist forces in South Vietnam:

Much has been said and written about the importance of winning the hearts and minds of the people in Vietnam if we are to be successful in carrying out our mission in that war-torn country. Victory will come as the people want to help themselves. We can win everything in Vietnam but the people, and suffer an abysmal defeat. We must start by knowing them as they are and building from there. It is self-defeating to be willing to do everything for the Vietnamese except understand them as persons.¹

The idea to begin research into the situation that existed in Vietnam, its mores and culture, to determine in essence feasibility of such a study as a pilot project, evolved during a Marine exercise (Operation Silver Lance), which was held on the west coast of the United States in March 1965. Prior to this time Chaplain Craven attempted to locate material which would assist the combat Marine in understanding local peoples. *The Army Area Handbook* was initially adopted for this purpose, along with Army religious studies, both of which had been field-tested in Vietnam. It was felt, however, that more specific data was essential to the Marine effort. This was confirmed as a consequence of experience gained in Operation Silver Lance, in which there were extensive simulations of problems that arise when military personnel are not adequately informed about, or capable of appreciating, the value systems of a society other than their own. Silver Lance convincingly demonstrated that the lack of such information could alienate local peoples, cause a decrease in security, a potential increase in casualties, and affect the extension of time necessary for successful pacification and redevelopment of strife-torn societies.

Prior to this period the United States Army had staffed a study very similar to the Marine project, en-

titled "The Impact of Indigenous Religions Upon U.S. Military Operations Under All Conditions." This study agreed that existing sources of information were inadequate to prepare the American servicemen for adjustment to a foreign culture.

After the information from Silver Lance had been digested, General Krulak and his staff chaplain, Captain Craven, decided to request the Chief of Chaplains to send an investigator to Vietnam to study how these beliefs affected behavior. They assigned initial priority to religion on the assumption that it largely determined ethical systems and cultural habits. Consistent with this determination, Commander Robert L. Mole (Seventh Day Adventist) was ordered to undertake such a study, and proceeded to do so immediately. The project was expected to take about six months.²

American Marines and naval personnel in Vietnam had always received basic indoctrination in the religious customs, practices, and taboos of the people. Shortly after U.S. Marines of MAG-16's Medium Helicopter Squadron-163, engaged on Operation Shufly, moved north from Soc Trang to Da Nang in September 1962, local missionaries were employed in troop indoctrination. While in 1963 and 1964 the indoctrination program at Da Nang became increasingly more sophisticated and effective, its effectiveness depended upon the talents of a single missionary and the chaplain assisting him. With the arrival of Marine combat units in Da Nang in March of 1965, it became readily apparent that an extensive program of lecture and discussions on the influence of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and other indigenous religions on the life of the people was necessary. While there was no specific connection between these events and the conversation between General Krulak and Chaplain Craven, the motivation behind both merged into the directive given Chaplain Mole which resulted in implementation of the "Southeast Asia Religious Research Project." Since the perception in Vietnam was already in this direction, the need for such materials as Chaplain Mole was responsible for producing was recognized by those in the field, and the result was a broad acceptance of and appreciation for his work.

During his several trips to Vietnam Chaplain Mole discussed his progress with III MAF Chaplain Garrett. Then, as Chaplain Mole neared the completion of research, Chaplain Craven urged preparation of

materials for the immediate use of chaplains, and Chaplain Garrett offered to assist him in the preparation of two lectures, with illustrative flip-charts, for general use by all chaplains in I Corps.

The lectures were prepared, the flip-charts were completed, and Chaplains McLean and Radasky of 3d Marine Division Headquarters presented the lectures to chaplains assembled for the purpose of evaluating them. Acceptance was immediate; chaplains were trained to present the materials. Two lectures on "Religions of Vietnam" and "Religiously Based Customs of Vietnam" were thereafter presented to newly arriving troops in all commands in III MAF.

Chaplain Mole continued to refine his materials and to add to them throughout the remainder of his one-year tour of duty with Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. He had reported for duty in August of 1965 and was relieved in July 1966. Phase One of the project, the research, preparation, and production of indoctrination materials suitable for use in orienting Navy and Marine Corps personnel in Vietnam was successfully completed by Chaplain Mole before his scheduled departure.

Chaplain Mole was relieved by Lieutenant Commander Richard A. McGonigal (United Presbyterian) as the Project Officer for the FMFPac-sponsored "Southeast Asia Religious Research Project." Since the research phase of the project had been completed and the emphasis now was to be implementation, the Chief of Chaplains directed that the term "research" be dropped from the project title.

Paragraph 1 of Chaplain McGonigal's charter letter reflected the change:

During the past year he (Chaplain Mole) has gathered a vast amount of information and materials on the religious dynamics, customs and traditions of the Vietnamese. From this material lecture presentations have been prepared and used by Chaplain Mole and by other chaplains of the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. With the completion of this preliminary task the emphasis now shifts from research to the revision and refinement of materials and methods of presentation. This must also be a concern for the personal response of our military personnel as they work with the Vietnamese people in achieving victory over the enemy and in establishing a strong and stable government for themselves. To accomplish this second phase of the project a relief was requested for Chaplain Mole and the Chief of Chaplains has assigned Lieutenant Commander Richard A. McGonigal, CHC, USN as the project officer for this purpose. As in the case of Chaplain Mole he is assigned to

the Staff of the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific/I Marine Amphibious Corps [Forward], who will furnish administrative and logistical support.³

In the same charter-letter Chaplain McGonigal's duties were set forth. He was to provide presentations, background information, and training aids for chaplains and others attempting to help our personnel in developing a more wholesome response and better attitude toward the local people; conduct training sessions for chaplains and other personnel who will be making presentations; assemble and evaluate information pertaining to the religious beliefs and value systems of indigenous people; prepare mass media inserts and other techniques for stimulating interest and discussion among the men; and solicit and evaluate feedback from all who conducted presentations and others involved in day-by-day relations with the people. Chaplain Craven was to provide overall field supervision and technical guidance and Chaplain Garrett was to exercise supervision while Chaplain McGonigal was working in I Corps Tactical Zone.

Phase two of the Religions of Southeast Asia Project was a natural extension of the research, preparation, and indoctrination phase. It was required to hold the behavioral, attitudinal beachhead established in the orientation lectures. Revised materials were made available to commands for presentation to Vietnam-bound troops still in the United States. In Vietnam it was noted that combat itself, with the hazards naturally associated with counterinsurgency warfare, and problems arising from joint military efforts, had a way of shaping unfavorable attitudes. Chaplain McGonigal therefore addressed himself to the matters of attitude changing and more effective communications.

The name for the project was changed to signify the new emphasis. Two words from Chaplain McGonigal's charter illustrated the shift in emphasis and became the official title of the effort. They were "Personal Response" and the official title became the "Personal Response Project."

Chaplain McGonigal's work was well received in Vietnam. Throughout the remainder of 1966 he continued to gather scientific samplings of attitudes and addressed himself to the matters of improved communications and attitude changing. In his December issue of the "Force Chaplain's Newsletter," Chaplain Craven said:

There is a growing awareness that the key to our pacification or Revolutionary Development Program in Vietnam, is the individual Marine himself. It is not enough to give things to people or to do things for people without relating to them as persons. During my November visit to Vietnam I found a great deal more interest in, and discussion of, the Personal Response Project. Major General Robertshaw invited me to speak about the project to the members of his mess when I was there as his guest for dinner. I described the background of the project and why the Commanding General FMFPAC requested the assignment of Chaplain Mole, who was relieved by Chaplain McGonigal. I also told how the Chief of Navy Chaplains had established it as a special project of the Chaplain Corps Planning Group under the direction of the Commanding General, FMFPAC. I emphasized that it was not a chaplains' program, but was designed to assist commands in carrying out their people-to-people and Civic Action programs. This is not "McGonigal's project" or a "Chaplain's project," for the matter of building better relationships with the Vietnamese is a command responsibility. By the nature of their training and calling, however, Chaplains do feel that they play a vital role in this endeavor.⁴

Chaplain Craven's remarks pointed up two interesting matters with regard to Personal Response in Vietnam. First, he voiced a growing sentiment that Personal Response was of such importance and magnitude that chaplains could no longer pursue its objective alone. It was developing into a command-wide effort on a level with civic action, as indeed it had been envisioned initially by General Krulak, Chaplain Craven, and Chaplain Mole. Second, his remarks pointed to the need, which chaplains felt, to subject their involvement in the program to careful theological scrutiny, and to distinguish their religious motivation from that of pacification or "Revolutionary Development."

What the Personal Response Program called into question was the traditional interpretation of the function of the military chaplain. The initial rationale employed to justify chaplains' involvement in this type of effort evolved from the recognition or belief, that much of the daily activity as well as the cultural manners of a people derived from religiously based foundations. To this was added the primary duty traditionally required of the chaplain that he advise his command on "the religious customs and institutions which members of the command should respect during visits to foreign countries."⁵ On these grounds, then, with the thought that the primary motive of the project was to provide data on religious customs, Chaplain Mole had been originally dispatched to Vietnam for the purpose, as he conceived of

it, of data collection. The results of his intensive efforts, titled "The Religions of South Vietnam in Faith and Fact," was compiled from many shorter releases, all authored and researched by Chaplain Mole, with the cooperation of Lieutenant Commander W. Warren Newman (Disciples of Christ), extraordinary writer and member of the Chaplain Corps Planning Group, whose principal mission was to oversee the project.

This manual assisted the Marines in the field by making them aware of local taboos and religious customs. But familiarity with Vietnamese religions turned out not to be the final answer to the problem of cross-cultural interaction and response to foreign cultures that Operation Silver Lance had illuminated. Under the impact of a developing awareness of the behavioral sciences which occurred while Chaplain Mole was serving in-country in Vietnam, a conceptual shift developed in the Planning Group that eventually changed the focus of the program and its research-oriented first phase. That this transition affected the ideology that supported the project was partially seen in the decision in June 1966 to change the name of the project to Personal Response in order to have it reflect the new direction. The new name more accurately presented the goals and priorities of the program which had slowly emerged and were defined as the result of the testing of the material fed it by the Southeast Asia Religious Project. The Planning Group felt that the presence or absence of religious information had little to do with cultural relationships, at least insofar as American experience in Vietnam was concerned. Chaplain Mole's religious data, while of distinct value as such, did not touch the real problem area of the relationship with indigenous peoples. It was discovered, in fact, that in certain instances the existence of specific religious information about an alien culture provided an individual with more to be contemptuous of in his regard for a society unfamiliar to him.

When Lieutenant Commander McGonigal departed for Vietnam in June 1966 to relieve Chaplain Mole, he went committed to a newer concept, more encompassing and subjective than the religious-ethical approach. The new philosophy of Personal Response transcended ideas which had preceded it and was more intellectually based. The 1966 concept of Personal Response focused on the recognition of value systems; it was based on the



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A187119

Chaplain Willard W. Bartlett gives a lecture on native religions to MAG-15 Marines.

awareness that Americans share with each other a common and distinctive value system, viewpoints, and patterns of communication and behaviorisms uniquely different from the value-belief-behavior systems of Vietnam. It was found that when these basic differences find no common point of understanding alienation often results, sometimes as the product of an unintentional violation of a value. Personal Response was officially defined in the following terms:

The Personal Response Project in Vietnam is a systematic effort to:

- a. Understand the Vietnamese culture by learning about its people, why they believe and act as they do, their religious principles and ethical value systems, in order to,
- b. Modify and eventually eliminate unfavorable attitudes and offensive behavior patterns toward indigenous citizens,

- c. Promote constructive relationships and appropriate mutual assistance between military personnel and the Vietnamese, and

- d. Increase in some degree trust and confidence between American military personnel and indigenous citizens.⁶

The importance of religion in this newly expanded philosophy was diminished. It no longer provided a rationale for the entire research project, but it still held a significant position in the foundational structure of the project and seemed to justify the continuing involvement of Navy chaplains. But religion as such was clearly no longer the controlling variable in the approach of Personal Response. Chaplain Warren Newman defined the parameters of the new project in more generalized terms: "This project grew out of the realization that the behavioral patterns and attitudes of people are a natural consequence of

their religious, cultural and ethical convictions and value systems and that greater understanding of people could result from increased awareness of these convictions and systems."⁷

Surveys of chaplains' attitudes showed that some believed that this conceptual shift from purely religious criteria to areas which involved attitude and behavior analysis removed the chaplain from his primary duty, the spiritual ministry to American servicemen. There arose a division of opinion surrounding this aspect of the program and some chaplains felt that such a future-oriented and largely untested program fell outside a chaplain's responsibilities. The Chief of Chaplains, Rear Admiral James W. Kelly, however, recognized Personal Response, as then conceived, as pastorally legitimate but secondary to religious and pastoral counseling functions. Among other chaplains Personal Response and its philosophy attracted many supporters who believed that its attempt to teach people to respect other cultural values in an effort to change attitudes was consistent with the chaplain's purpose in the fundamental business of attempting to effect a reconciliation of man to man.

In any case, opinion relating to the project differed. There were those who clearly thought chaplains were being drawn away from their primary mission and there were those who believed that the chaplain's responsibilities extended beyond the sacramental ministry and fell within the concept of Personal Response as outlined by its new philosophy.

The adverse reactions, developed from considered reflection on the part of concerned clergymen over the emerging idea of the Personal Response Project, were perhaps in response to the possible implication of the Chaplain Corps in a church-state controversy. In addition, many of the negative feelings toward the project may have been fueled by the nagging doubt that it could accomplish its purpose, which was admittedly highly idealistic. This, plus a doubt that chaplains were the ones who should have the responsibility for making such a program operate, contributed to a considerable amount of apprehensive reluctance.

By June of 1966, however, Personal Response had matured as a distinct philosophy, but it remained to be proven whether this philosophy was realistic, and whether it could answer the many questions associated with the culture shock felt by the Marine and actually prevent the development of a negative

attitude toward the Vietnamese, given the realities of war. Could the Personal Response Project satisfactorily resolve the very real problems caused by the counter-insurgency situation, on the one hand, and the hypothetical theological difficulties seen by its critics within the Chaplain Corps? Could Personal Response reconcile man to man? Before these long-term questions could be answered more concrete information was needed concerning the attitudes of personnel stationed in-country. An index was essential before action could be taken to correct problem areas. In short, the level of discomfort with the project, and its extent, needed to be determined before anything could be done in the way of correcting it.

Chaplain McGonigal had this in mind when he relieved Chaplain Mole, who would be returning to the United States for further graduate study. When Chaplain McGonigal arrived, he was prepared to implement the new philosophy of Personal Response with a new methodology. Primary among his initial objectives was the administration of an attitude survey among the Marines in I Corps. This survey, it was hoped, would provide a reference point by which the entire project could be evaluated. It was both designed to show how the Vietnamese look at us and we at them. The initial results were somewhat disturbing; it turned out that of the Marine personnel, 44 percent liked while 37 percent disliked the Vietnamese. And while 72 percent of the Vietnamese surveyed liked Americans, 46 percent already felt that we did not like them. Past experience of the Army in Korea indicated that this was a potentially dangerous balance of opinion and that corrective action was necessary before these attitudes became fixed. The most critical opinion group was found to be the platoon sergeant or E-5 level, and the junior officer level. These groups had the most direct contact with the Vietnamese.

As soon as this information became known III MAF initiated a program designed to correct, or at least bridge the problem areas. Chaplain McGonigal, who directed this effort in the field, prepared the *III MAF Platoon Leaders Personal Response Notebook*. The motivating thought was that attitudes toward peoples of other cultures are learned behavior and therefore can be unlearned to some degree. This publication therefore attempted to use a teaching method which would allow the student to experience cultural differences and deal with them in a positive and healthy way. The instrument

used was called the "critical incident technique" which consisted of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles. The technique was formally developed and given its name by the American Institute of Research (AIR) and relies upon extraordinary examples of cross-cultural encounters which were observably effective or ineffective, rather than attempting massive data accumulation and related indoctrination that might or might not have been related to interaction success or failure. The "critical incident" explored the potential for the isolation of the critical factors involved in the success or failure of intercultural contacts and helped to establish the critical requirement for effective cross-cultural interaction. The technique was designed to eliminate the collection and dissemination of opinions and provide the student with access to a record of specific behavior characteristics which could be carefully

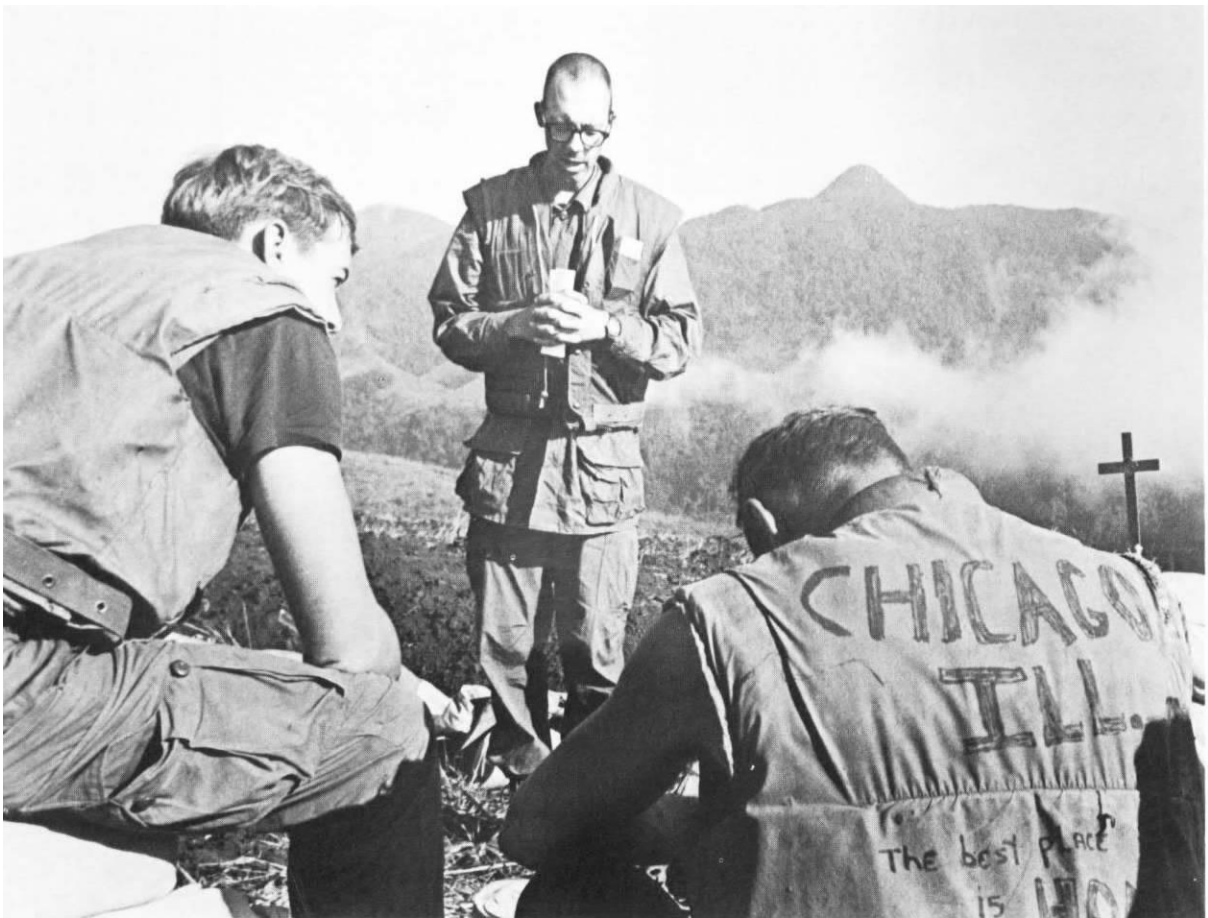
studied as a means of isolating the factors which either antagonize or facilitate understanding and cooperation across cultural barriers.

The *Platoon Leader's Personal Response Notebook* was initially roughed out for use without the critical-incident technique included in the format. It contained twenty-four briefings for squad-sized groups and was constructed around successful and unsuccessful interaction experiences. The publication of this *Notebook* coincided with the formalization of an educational structure which involved lecture, discussion, illustrated message posters, human interest news releases, and role-playing in village-simulation settings at the NCO Leadership School in Okinawa, and the installation of a heavy emphasis in the Orientation School for combined action units. Since General Krulak demanded a product that was educationally sound as well as practical, Chaplain Newman came from Washington to meet Chaplain McGonigal and Chaplain Craven in Hawaii where they spent an intensive day adding the critical-

Religious services during Operation Medina (1967) were held frequently for the 1st Marines, moving in convoy towards Quang Tri, by regimental Chaplain Carl A. Auel.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A370462





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A190294

Chaplain (Lieutenant Commander) Ray W. Stubbe leads Marines of the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, in worship services during the siege of the Khe Sanh Combat Base.

incident technique to the *Notebook*. The result was a new publication entitled *Unit Leader's Personal Response Handbook*.

Within III MAF itself the command implemented the project through the information of Personal Response Councils. They were established in the 3d Marine Division, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, and the Force Logistics Command. In January 1967, Major General Wood B. Kyle, commanding the 3d Marine Division, directed that a Personal Response Council be established and a project officer be assigned to assess the attitudes of Marines toward the Vietnamese people and to promote better relations at the lowest possible echelon. This council, of which the division chaplain was a member and to meetings of which the assistant division chaplain was invited, met once a month to discuss methods and procedures for troop indoctrination and to develop methods for fostering respect between Marines and

Vietnamese. Participation in the project also occurred at a less intense level in the 1st Marine Division, 1st MP Battalion, 9th Amphibious Brigade, and the Naval Support Activity at Da Nang.

The most active support developed in the field, perhaps because it was there, where contact with both the enemy and the people was constant, that the working results of Personal Response were most clearly seen. Within the tactical area of responsibility of the 3d Marine Division a great many life-saving incidents were reported whose origin lay in the success of Personal Response in promoting intercultural attitude improvement. The rate of life-saving incidents was considerably lower in areas where Personal Response was less vigorously pursued. Throughout its history in Vietnam, Personal Response was found to be a valuable aid to Marines in the field, and more and more military minds began to support the intention of the program when



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A369480

Jewish Yom Kippur service is held in the 1st Marine Division chapel in September 1966.

Individuals participating in the rituals are: (from left) Chaplain Robert L. Reiner; EAD3 Allan Schwartz; HM3 Bruce Potolofsky (cantor); and Chaplain David B. Saltzman.

it could be proved that it paid off in lives saved. The fact remained that it was easier to patrol when the people liked you.

Chaplain McGonigal was relieved by Commander Otto Schneider (United Church of Christ) who proceeded to take over the formal structure of Personal Response, while Chaplain McGonigal served a six-month extension to conduct further attitude surveys. Chaplain Schneider managed the program and the growing administration established in conjunction with it in I Corps with great efficiency and in July 1968 he was relieved in turn by Commander Neil M. Stevenson (United Presbyterian).

Phase II of Personal Response had begun with the promulgation of Annex H to III MAF Operations Order 201. This order established Personal Response councils as part of each major command and an

ongoing training program. It superseded III MAF Force Order 1730.3A which suggested that, on a trial basis, commands appoint PR councils. This assured Personal Response a broader acceptance in the operational considerations of the force. Up to this time Personal Response had been supported and strongly endorsed by III MAF, but it did not have the stature of an operational program. It remained an ideal whose significance often went unrecognized. Many officers persisted in interpreting Vietnam as a conventional war, and for them Personal Response seemed an unnecessary administrative burden, and part of the chaplain's program. Some field commanders, however, who began to understand the implications and political significance of the ideological war for the hearts and minds of the people, recognized Personal Response as an essential bridge between the U.S. military presence and



Department of Defense (USN) Photo 1120683
*Greek Orthodox Chaplain Boris T. Geeza officiates
 in a 1967 service for the 4th Marines at Dong Ha.*

positive cultural adjustment with local populations.

Meeting the Needs of Worship

While various chaplains were engaged in strategically important teaching ministries the vast majority were continuing to serve the religious needs of Marines in the uniqueness of the preaching service and with the sacraments.

In the 9th Marines, Lieutenant Commander Thomas J. McDermott (Roman Catholic) relieved Chaplain Dowd with the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines in August 1966. When McDermott reported, the battalion was located south of Da Nang between Highway 1 and Hill 55. Since two line company command posts were located in perimeter areas accessible only by helicopter, to provide religious coverage it was necessary for Chaplain McDermott to coordinate his trips with resupply runs. The companies were resupplied daily, so there was no difficulty in returning the following day. This over-

night visit became the key to a successful ministry within the battalion. He remembered:

I now began to experience the hardships and the dangers which are part and parcel of a line company. This is the common denominator or the great equalizer in the mind of a field Marine. Sharing his miserable existence, eating the same C-rations, sleeping alongside a newly dug hole in case of a mortar attack, surviving the intolerable weather, and establishing the rapport so essential in our ministry.⁸

Coverage within the separated companies posed a problem. Beside the company CP there were two other platoon positions from which patrols and ambushes were executed. Transportation was arranged by the company commander, usually in conjunction with the resupply run on a tank or amtrack.

Chaplain Henry T. Lavin celebrates Mass in a hamlet church south of Phu Bai on Easter Sunday 1967 for Marines of a combined action company and Vietnamese villagers. Just after this picture was taken, a Viet Cong sniper fired on the congregation and worship was disrupted while he was being flushed out.

Photo courtesy of Chaplain Henry T. Lavin





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A187979

Religious services are held for Company I, 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, with men at their position near Rock Pile. Note the use of C-ration cases for the improvised altar.

Sometimes it was necessary to go on foot and then always with a fire team. The fire team was required as a precaution should an occasion arise that was just too much for the chaplain's assistant to handle. Chaplain McDermott had reason to be grateful for the practice on one occasion after he had held Mass on Hill 22. He reported: "On my return, my assistant and I walked into a ambush. Crossing rice paddies at the foot of the hill, automatic weapons opened up on us, wounding my assistant. It was probably no more than two VC who paid close attention to my schedule.⁹

Just after Chaplain McDermott's arrival at the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, Lieutenant John T. Collins (Southern Baptist) relieved Chaplain Cory in 1st Battalion, 9th Marines. Chaplain Collins wryly wrote:

On Hill 55, I lived underground. From the Command Post I gave religious coverage to the forward companies,

moving about by chopper, amtrack, tank, mighty-mite and by foot. During my very first service out forward with Delta Company, I received a lesson in humility. As the men gathered for services they spaced themselves and sat low in a dry rice paddy. I stood up on the dyke to preach. About half-way through the service, 10 rounds from a VC weapon whizzed by my ear. The Chairman of the Board of Deacons and six companies took care of the disturbance. Needless to say, I completed the service down in the rice paddy, on a level with the laity.¹⁰

Preaching in the combat environment was not only difficult from the point of view of individual safety. What the chaplain came to say also occasioned long hours of personal soul searching. Since speaking forthrightly about eternal truth always takes the listeners current situation into account, preaching in the context of the Vietnamese conflict had a particular agony, and could not be tossed off lightly with traditional phrases. Chaplain Collins stated:

The closer we got to the front lines the more responsive were Marines to the chaplain's presence and to the worship services. Foxhole religion for the most part stands open to much criticism, but the shallow experience can sometimes act as the catalyst for a deeper religious experience. In the "grunt" I saw a lot of boys grow into men, and a lot of men grow spiritually in the chaos of war. I discovered that the chaplain must have some answers as regards war and the taking of a human life. The presence and message of the chaplain should remind them that we can never kill indiscriminately. The battle to resist the threat of becoming bestial in this kind of conflict is always present.¹¹

During this period Protestant coverage of the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines was given by Chaplain Lionberger, who followed a vigorous but not unique, worship schedule. On Mondays he traveled by vehicle out about five miles to conduct a service for a combined action company unit at 0900. At 1030 a few miles farther out a service was held at Company B. Moving to another company position on a nearby hill, Company D was covered at 1400 in its messhall. On Thursdays a resupply helicopter took him to the top of Dong Den Hill north of Da Nang, altitude 2,500 feet, with a small helo platform scraped off a narrow peak where previously three helos had crashed. An artillery observation team of 12 men inhabited the top of Dong Den, a strip of ground about 15 feet wide by 300 feet long, with cliffs and jungle on every side. A service on Dong Den was usually a "rush job." It was necessary to complete the service by the time the choppers finished the resupply. Flying down then from Dong Den he would land on Hill 124 where there was a platoon of Company B where the preaching was complicated by, he reported, "the hooting of monkeys and the songs of wild birds continuously filling the air."¹²

On Fridays he flew by chopper to Hill 364 above the regimental command post where radio relay and artillery observation teams were located. Saturday was nearly the busiest day of the week when he covered Company C. The first stop was the Company CP, located at the Plant about 10 miles away for services at 0900. From there he began the climb toward Hai Van Pass, stopping at Hill 358 to conduct a service at 1030. "The scenery was beautiful," he reported, "and reaching Hai Van Pass, the view of the Da Nang harbor was breath-taking."¹³ Sunday services at the 3d Marines CP began the Sabbath and three Lutheran services in the afternoon finished an arduous week of 14 services. Chaplain Lionberger further commented:



Photo courtesy of III MAF
Ammunition boxes serve as a makeshift altar as Chaplain William L. Childers, 9th Marines, conducts services on a jungle hilltop south of Khe Sanh.

One of the lessons learned during this ministry was that the chaplain not only had the opportunity to serve the men spiritually, but that any other favors performed for the men resulted in a more favorable response to his ministry. I collected hundreds of paperback books from the Division Chaplain office for distribution to the companies of 1st Battalion, 3d Marines and on one occasion carried a refreshment cooler to the men on Dong Den Mountain.¹⁴

Dong Den Mountain was the "high point" to which Division Chaplain Morton later referred when he quoted Catholic Chaplain Witt as claiming he had the "Highest Masses" in all of Da Nang.

Conducting the preaching and sacramental ministry at the field hospitals presented a continual and special challenge. Chaplain Scanlon reported from 1st Battalion, 1st Marines as a relief for Chaplain Glynn, at the C Med Field Hospital.

Chaplain Scanlon who joined his old friend

Chaplain Kary at C Med, reflected later on the transfer from a line battalion to hospital ministry:

It is quieter here from the point of view of noise. The big guns aren't always fighting and there is little fear of imminent attack as there always was in the Battalion. But here there is a different kind of draining. Here the results of enemy cunning and barbarity and the results of our own human mistakes in battle and strategy are brought. The dead and dismembered, the seriously wounded and the slightly wounded, the neuro-psychiatric cases—dismembered emotionally and mentally, the inevitable product of violent killing—those afflicted by diseases native to this country, all these as well as the doctors and corpsmen, form the congregation of the Field Hospital Chaplain. While the strain of imminent battle is not close, the strain of absorbing so much human hurt has sent me away from our A & S tent many times with tears on my cheeks. Those at home who may wonder can be sure that every effort was made, some indeed heroic, when our doctors and corpsmen have worked on the patients without counting the hours or days, without rest and meals.¹⁵

But perhaps there are no more dramatic memories of worship services and preaching opportunities by

chaplains than those held while on combat operations. Worship services on operations were continuously unique, demanding inventiveness from the chaplain.

Operations on the southern perimeter of the Da Nang Combat Base had been occurring in increasing numbers since the massive Harvest Moon operation the previous December. From their end-of-tour narratives, it was apparent that for many chaplains one operation ran into another. Accounts of one or another period of combat were often omitted, a combat ministry having become the norm or standard rather than the exception. A sensitive observation and record was made by one chaplain while on Operation Liberty, which was a division-wide scrubbing action in the Da Nang TAOR that extended the Marine "front lines" to the Ky Lam River. Lieutenant Delbert J. Cory (Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints) reported:

I rode a circuit, holding services for each company and platoon and spending the night with the men where

Worship service held in the field in 1968 by Company K, 3d Battalion, 4th Marines of the 3d Marine Division. Note the use of the helmet and cross on the improvised altar.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A190846





Department of Defense (USN) Photo

*Chaplain William L. Childers conducts services on a jungle hilltop south of Khe Sanh.
Chaplain Childers was serving as a battalion chaplain with the 9th Marines.*

nightfall would catch me. In addition to 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, I held services for 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, First Marines CP and for the MAAG at Hoi An. Assistance for Catholic coverage was given by Chaplains Roy and Kenny. On Operation Liberty the troops swept south to Hoi An on a line and I was able to walk the line from the beach to Highway 1 holding services as I went. I usually covered the 8 miles in 3 or 4 days. However, one day I began at daybreak with a service and covered six platoons with a service for each. Each of the platoons' CPs was about a mile from the other, over hot sand dunes. It was a hard, hot day as my last service was completed right at dark. Visual contact was maintained with the troops along the line since I was traveling with only my clerk as escort. No trouble was encountered but I had a few anxious moments when I crossed a wide rice paddy and failed to find the position along the line at the time I reached the tree line on the other side. After a hasty retreat across the paddy I found I had been given wrong directions and had been about 700 yards ahead of the line. After that, I carried my own map to double check the directions I received. Such "circuit riding" required a new fox hole each night so my hands became calloused with digging and I usually returned from the field after 4 or 5 days filthy dirty."

Regimental Chaplain Lemieux later had this comment about Chaplain Cory, "he was among the bravest chaplains I have ever known."¹⁶

Professional developments in the 1st Marine Divi-

sion religious coverage in the Chu Lai Combat Base was coordinated by 1st Marine Division Chaplain John Wissing from his arrival on 27 March 1966 to his relief on 25 August and detachment the following day. Weekly meetings of all chaplains in the enclave were held and topics of professional interest were presented and discussed. Such subjects as "Increasing Church Attendance", "American Red Cross Briefings", and "Religious Coverage in the First Marine Division, First Marine Aircraft Wing and Seabees", were discussed. Special presentations were made by Chaplains Capodanno and McGonigal. Chaplain Capodanno, having been a Maryknoll missionary to the Far East before making application for the Navy Chaplain Corps, was especially equipped to present the subject, "Psychology of the Oriental Mind." He was invited to make the presentation to General Fields and his division staff, and to other groups concerned with understanding the minds of the Vietnamese people. Chaplain McGonigal spoke on the "Personal Response Project" and described the data collection process in which he was then engaged.

At monthly intervals, III MAF Chaplain Garrett made special presentations of professional interest to



Department of Defense (USN) Photo 36197
A chaplain celebrates Catholic Mass in the regimental chapel of the 4th Marines at Dong Ha (1967).

chaplains in the three enclaves. His intention was to keep III MAF chaplains fully informed on development in the Chaplain Corps, policies relating to the Chaplain Corps ministry in Vietnam, and organizational and administrative procedures as they affected the chaplain's work in I Corps Tactical Zone. Chaplain Garrett discussed "Fitness Reports," "The Field Hospital Ministry," "Memorial Services," "Chaplain Corps Civic Action," and "The Chaplain's Role in Personal Affairs."

In the last report of his tenure as division chaplain, Chaplain Wissing indicated to the Chief of Chaplains that, "Seven chapels were constructed. Every unit having a chaplain now has a chapel. Extraordinary civic affairs projects include the construction of one Protestant church and two Catholic churches in local communities. Assistance was also given from chapel funds to orphanages, schools, seminaries, etc."¹⁷

When Captain David J. Casazza (Roman Catholic) reported for duty as relief for Chaplain Wissing, 1st Marine Division chaplain, on 24 August, 18 chaplains were assigned to the division. His T/O strength was officially established at 23. Four of his chaplains were in Da Nang with the 1st

Marines; 14 were in Chu Lai. In the one full day spent together Chaplains Wissing and Casazza conferred at length about the personnel situation, noting that by the end of October with new chaplains arriving, the situation should be stabilized.

Chaplain Casazza adopted the policy, then in effect in the 3d Marine Division, of rotating chaplains at six-month intervals between line and support battalions. Although he too endorsed the policy as a sound one, Chaplain Wissing had never had sufficient personnel to do more than establish a pattern of minimal coverage. Changing chaplains was not as easy as it appears. All changes had to be cleared with both regimental and battalion commanding officers, and of course, the chaplain had to be consulted as well. Often and very naturally, the infantry battalion chaplains did not want to be changed. The commanding officers did not want to lose their chaplains. Chaplain Casazza reported:

In one case the Regimental Commander didn't want one of his battalion chaplains changed. He didn't even remember the chaplain's name, but he didn't want him changed. I argued that the chaplain was tired and needed a rest. He finally agreed to let the chaplain go but only after the next operation. The chaplain was wounded on the operation. After this, I wavered no more.¹⁸

Some units presented unusually difficult rotational problems. When Lieutenant Edward R. Toner (Roman Catholic) arrived for duty as assistant regimental chaplain of the 11th Marines, he noted that coverage of the artillery unit was no easy task since it consisted of regimental headquarters plus four battalions with four batteries to each battalion. He reported:

After I was settled a bit, Chaplain Barcus and I took turns spending a night with each battery of the various battalions. While visiting, we held religious services, gave lectures on Vietnam and its religions, and tried in general to speak to as many persons as possible. This continued until 1 December when I was transferred, to the Second Battalion, because Regimental Headquarters had moved to Da Nang.¹⁹

Chaplain Toner had reported one week after regimental chaplain Lieutenant Commander Richard E. Barcus (American Baptist) was reassigned from 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. Chaplain Barcus confirmed what Chaplain Toner said about the widely dispersed units of the regiment and what Chaplains Malliett and Blank, their predecessors in



Department of Defense (USN) Photo K-36219

Chaplain greets worshippers leaving the chapel of the 1st Marines at Da Nang (1967).

the regiment, had found in earlier months. One of his first observations was that artillery was so spread out that it was an impossible task to give all the units the kind of coverage he would like. In the Chu Lai TAOR alone it spread north to south from Hill 54 to Quang Ngai and to the Special Forces Camp at Tien Phuoc to the west.

Chaplain Barcus remembered:

Fortunately much of the artillery is close enough to infantry units so that coverages for services is not an impossibility. However, one of my first steps was to take as many services, that had been previously handled by other chaplains, as I could. I averaged three services per Sunday with two or three more during the week. Visitations were likewise difficult. I developed a schedule which put me out in the batteries three nights of every week. In this way each battery could be visited overnight in a month and a half. The artillery supports all of the combat operations in the area and I make an effort to visit the batteries who moved

into the operation area. Services with the men in the field is the most satisfying part of the artillery chaplain's ministry.

The person to person ministry was emphasized and the chaplains were urged to go out to the men in all their working areas. To my observations, the chaplains did a splendid job in reaching their men and providing for their religious needs. I de-emphasized the notion that Sunday was all-sacred and encouraged the provision of services throughout the week. Only in this way could everyone be reached.²⁰

Wing chaplains during this period, were heavily involved in Civic Action. Lieutenant Cecil R. Threadgill (Southern Baptist) of MAG-11 said:

One of the wonderful things about my tour here had been in the thrilling way that my fellow Americans have responded in helping the people here. As the needs of the Tin Lanh School have been revealed through newspaper articles and letters, individuals and churches all across the



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A187833

Men of the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, in the field near the Demilitarized Zone on 16 September 1966, hear Mass celebrated by Chaplain Lt Harris White. Engaged in Operation Prairie, Marines keep a low profile in the surrounding plains covered by tall grass.

United States have rallied to the call. Consequently it has been my blessed privilege to be the recipient and thus distributor of literally tons of clothing, school supplies, health supplies, food and toys, plus hundreds of dollars. I have never seen people respond with more gratitude than the fold at the church and school as many of their needs have been met. I have been most wonderfully and unusually blessed to have been in this position.²¹

Other significant Civic Action Projects were undertaken by MAG-16 chaplains in the summer of 1966. Lieutenant Donald T. McGrogan (Roman Catholic) began working on what was later to be called "Boy's Town" on Da Nang East and Chaplain Bartlett began working on the III MAF Vietnamese Education Scholarship Fund. "Boys Town" was to be a Catholic home for orphaned boys, operated by Father Bernard Phu Van Hoang and situated on Da Nang East. Initial cost of the home was estimated at \$12,000 for which Chaplain McGrogan, with III MAF Chaplain Garrett, began to plan. The III MAF Vietnamese Education Scholarship Fund was to consist of a board drawn from all religious groups in the Da Nang area who would select able and deserving students for whom the necessary financial assistance for a complete high school education would be provided. So successful were these significant civic action projects that they were to persist through following years, meeting specific needs among the Vietnamese people, generating great humanitarian interest on the part of American Marines and Navy personnel, and cementing Vietnamese-American relations in the area.

Lieutenant David B. Saltzman (Jewish) was the first Jewish chaplain to be assigned to a wing unit in Vietnam. He arrived in Da Nang after a delay enroute on Taiwan, to lead Jewish High Holy Days observances for naval personnel there. He found an agreeable reception, and remembered:

Chaplain Hammerl and Chaplain Wright were so cooperative and efficient, that within an hour of arriving in

Da Nang I was dressed in proper uniform and headed for Chu Lai on another C-130. There I met Chaplain Reiner who was conducting a "delayed" Yom Kippur service for those men who could not attend service in Da Nang. Throughout my tour, I have been on the move. I have found chaplains happy to be able to help in furthering my program and desirous of making my task as successful as possible.²²

The story of Chaplain Saltzman's tour of duty with the wing was one of continuous travel. He was constantly on the move to Chu Lai, Phu Bai, Dong Ha, and Quang Tri. The spiritual satisfaction, he said, "granted to me, the Jewish men, and the people who went out of their way to help, will always be a spring from which to bring forth strength to live by the motto, 'cooperation without compromise.'"²³

Lieutenant John F. Weaver (Lutheran), who spent his entire tour in the Far East with MWSG-17, found great satisfaction developing his ministry within it. His contribution in the field of education warrants attention. Twenty-two Character Guidance and Religions in Vietnam presentations were given to personnel within the command during this year, while 31 English classes were taught for Japanese while he was at Iwakuni. He outlined his thinking about teaching and preaching in his end of tour report:

The compassionate ideal of the Christian ministry makes the chaplain something of a natural for working with indigenous population while in a land other than his own. However he must exercise caution in the amount of time and effort expended in this type of work in relationship to his primary mission as a pastor, priest or rabbi. The experience gleaned while serving as Acting Group Civil Affairs Officer of MSWG-17 for a period of three months, upon first arriving in RVN, is to be cherished and appreciated. As the civil affairs work, and the chaplain's religious duties, multiplied, it became necessary to relinquish coordination of the general civic action program. I have, however, continued to be involved in religious civil affairs functions since that time.²⁴

CHAPTER 8

Risking and Reaching (June-December 1966)

*Operation Prairie – Arrivals: New and Old – More Growing Pains – 1st Marine Division Chaplains – Seabees
Chaplains in I Corps, October-December 1966 – Christmas 1966*

During May and June of 1966 intelligence sources had indicated a general buildup of North Vietnamese Army units was taking place south of the Demilitarized Zone near the northernmost boundary of I Corps Tactical Zone. It was suspected that two NVA divisions had infiltrated through the Demilitarized Zone and were preparing an extensive network of fortifications and tunnels in preparation for a more conventional invasion of South Vietnam. The NVA had recently suffered a succession of reverses in its attempt to skirt Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces to enter South Vietnam through Saravane and Attapeu Provinces of Laos. Since this attempt to be absorbed in what appeared to be Viet Cong units, and thus maintain the fiction that the conflict was purely an internal one was a failure, the North Vietnamese decided to abandon their already compromised disguise and make a frontal assault. Such an assault would relieve pressures on insurgent guerrilla forces of General Walt, and force an abandonment of the successful enclave concept. To lure thinly spread American Marine units into position for another Dien Bien Phu would also provide the propaganda victory badly needed by the North Vietnamese.

In the two-week period from 1-15 July a succession of 18 3d Marine Division reconnaissance teams were inserted in Quang Tri Province and along the DMZ. Seventeen of these teams made contact with the North Vietnamese. The presence of the enemy was confirmed. On 15 July Brigadier General Lowell E. English's Task Force Delta was committed to a massive search and destroy operation in Quang Tri Province extending all the way to the DMZ. Contact with the North Vietnamese Army's 324B Division was established at once. American and South Vietnamese forces consisted of eight battalions of U.S. Marines and an ARVN force of infantry, rangers, and airborne units.

Lieutenant Randall S. Harris (Episcopal) was with the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines and Lieutenant

George R. McHorse (Southern Baptist) with the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines. Their battalions were inserted in a blocking position astride an infiltration and escape route near Cam Lo. Lieutenant Thomas B. Handley (United Presbyterian) was with the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, which began to drive north, and Lieutenant Commander Frank B. Baggot (Southern Baptist) was with the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines which had been operating as the Special Landing Force when it landed by helicopter near Pho Hai on 16 July. From Pho Hai the battalion drove west to link up with 3d Marine Division units two days later. The operation was called Hastings.

For nine days the fighting continued furiously. North Vietnamese tactics remained unchanged from previous encounters: probe attack with mortars and automatic weapons and withdraw into the jungle. But the tactic became more difficult to implement as the vice closed from three directions. Dong Ha was extraordinarily busy. Commander James A. Powell (Roman Catholic), 4th Marines Regimental Chaplain wrote:

Dong Ha has been described as "a cloud of red dust surrounding an airstrip which had the dimensions of a band aid." Soon there were clouds of red dust climbing 20 feet into the air as the huge C-130's coming into the field every few minutes, reversing their props to bring them to a halt, cast solid sheets of dust skyward as far as one could see.¹

The regimental aid station was quickly set up in an old abandoned French fort. It had been determined that all the wounded were to be evacuated to this casualty and clearing station. Chaplain Powell's station was to be there. Lieutenant Commander Floyd E. Sims (Southern Baptist) was just reporting to the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines to replace Chaplain Harris who had been medically evacuated to the United States. His battalion was at the moment engaged in intense combat so, unable to get to it, he took care of the Protestant ministry at the aid station. The two chaplains had their work cut out for them. Besides the many, many casualties that began

to flow in, they went to the airstrip and the bivouac areas, telling the men to separate into Catholic and Protestant groups for divine services. Chaplain Powell wrote:

I was able to offer 23 Masses in three days. For me, certainly a record. As things quieted down a bit, Floyd was able to get to his battalion, and I, by helo, was able to get to many of the battalions desiring the services of a Catholic chaplain. So, by helo, mite, by mule and by good old "shanks mare," I became familiar with names like "Helicopter Valley," "The Rockpile" and others, and the outcome, although expensive, was never in doubt. At "D" Med for the first time in my life I saw the ravages of war with young men killed and wounded. There were some memorable incidents with the wounded. I shall never forget the appreciation of giving a cup of water to those that were permitted water or a wet 4x4 gauze pad to those not allowed water. Prayer was greatly appreciated by the wounded, especially a prayer of thanksgiving that their lives had been spared. Many would request that I visit a buddy and have prayer with him first and then return for prayer with them. I shall never forget one critically wounded man that I had prayer with. After the prayer he asked me to stay with him while the doctors did a tracheotomy. In spite of the pain he was most brave. I was grateful when I could report to 2d Battalion, 4th Marines in the field. I do not believe any duty can be as trying emotionally as seeing wounded and killed day after day. Every hospital chaplain deserves the respect and admiration of all.²

On 18 July two more Da Nang battalions were committed to the operation. The 1st Battalion, 1st Marines and 1st Battalion, 3d Marines were lifted to Dong Ha by C-130. Chaplain Cory, with 1st Battalion, 1st Marines reported:

We were only a few miles from the DMZ northwest of Dong Ha. It was impossible to reach one company by helicopter because of the rugged terrain and jungle and an escort could not be spared to go on foot. It would have been an extended trip of two or three days. Even moving between platoons required considerable effort. In some places, it was so steep that steps had to be cut with an entrenching tool. In one place, elephant grass was trampled down to make a place large enough for a service and in another place, part of the jungle had to be cleared out to get even a dozen troops together.³

Two weeks of heavy fighting, which extended from Dong Ha to the Demilitarized Zone, resulted in nearly 900 enemy troops killed and enemy forces in the area being widely dispersed. Scattered enemy units retreated hastily through the jungle undergrowth and across the mountains, avoiding as best they could the blocked infiltration routes, to sanctuary within and above the DMZ. Recon-

naissance patrols discovered hastily dug graves, weapons, and stores of food and ammunition left behind by retreating North Vietnamese forces. Occasionally an enemy unit would show some signs of fight. When a group of stragglers revealed its position by imprudently firing on two patrolling companies of 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, the response was prompt. A four-hour artillery and 81mm mortar barrage scattered the force, which left behind 14 dead. Operation Hastings was concluded on 2 August, but not before Chaplain McHorse was wounded in the face by shrapnel from enemy mortars while attempting to rescue personnel from a downed helicopter. Chaplain McHorse and several other chaplains were decorated for their conduct during Hastings.

Before the Marines could even dream of their hardback tents at Phu Bai, Operation Prairie I began to heat up in earnest and the regiment was back in business again at its old stand in Dong Ha. The plans for Dong Ha began to take on a long range look. Huge Army artillery pieces arrived, Force Logistic Command (FLC) set up its stores, and more battalions arrived. New names were heard. The Artillery Plateau was at that time a beautifully grassy hill overlooking the DMZ. It was later to be named for a heroic Marine and called Camp Carroll. Khe Sanh was a nice spot far to the west near Laos where the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines was to guard a Special Forces Camp and a vital airstrip. And there was Mutter's Ridge where the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines added to its reputation under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William Masterpool. Then, too, there was Con Thien, a barren village, leveled but by no means dead, and Gio Linh which was under the very noses of the North Vietnamese Army. All these names and places became familiar to chaplains as they rode their circuit, sometimes in good weather, sometimes in the cold, rainy, muddy monsoon; sometimes in peace and quiet, sometimes in extreme peril.

As Hastings ended and Operation Prairie began Lieutenant Stanley J. Beach (General Association of Regular Baptists) relieved Chaplain McHorse in the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines. Chaplain Beach had prevailed upon division Chaplain Morton for the assignment, wanting to serve an infantry battalion since his arrival.

When Operation Prairie I commenced, all three battalions of the 4th Marines were committed. To augment Task Force Delta's three battalions, fresh

troops from the 5th and 7th Marines at Chu Lai were brought to northern I Corps and the Da Nang battalions were permitted to remain in their cantonments for the time being. In addition, one battalion of the 26th Marines, recently deployed from the reactivated 5th Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, joined the action in late August.

Operation Prairie

Following closely upon the heels of Operation Hastings, Prairie began at a comparatively slow pace, but would continue, in four phases, until 31 May 1967. It was apparent that the North Vietnamese intended to move across the Demilitarized Zone and that Hastings had only temporarily discouraged their attempts to capture and hold the cities of Quang Tri and Dong Ha. The degree of sanctuary which they enjoyed in and above the Demilitarized Zone represented an advantage too significant to ignore. Enemy artillery regiments, mortar and rocket units were moved into position in the DMZ and began firing at Vietnamese villages and American troop concentrations, supply centers, and air strips now being established in the area. For the first time, across the DMZ, the war appeared to be assuming the proportions of conventional combat.

In September several additional battalions, this time from the 1st Marine Division at Chu Lai, were air lifted into the operation. The 2d Battalion, 7th Marines was first to be committed. Due to the medical evacuation of Chaplain Pearson, the battalion had no chaplain attached until Lieutenant William C. L. Asher (American Baptist) was assigned temporarily from the 1st Motor Transport Battalion on 29 August. Chaplain Asher joined the battalion as it engaged in increasingly heavier fighting near Dong Ha. Chaplain Asher was subsequently assigned permanently to the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines. He later recalled:

During Operation Prairie, I learned how to dig fox holes, conduct services in the field, build poncho shelters, pray with my eyes open, walk through rivers, eat C rations, and talk to a wounded [man] without flinching. I didn't have to learn fear, but I honed the sense to a fine edge. On the other hand, my reception into 2d Battalion, 7th Marines had been such that I was more a part of it than I have ever been in a unit before. My fears were unjustified, and my feeling of unity with the Battalion has never wavered.⁴

The next battalion from Chu Lai to be committed



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A188450

PFC Richard E. Ferris is shown reading his Bible on a five-minute break after hiking for three hours during Operation Prairie near the Demilitarized Zone.

to Operation Prairie also came from the 7th Marines. With Lieutenant Lawrence L. Clover (United Presbyterian) as its chaplain, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines augmented Task Force Delta's battalions by relieving a much battered 2d Battalion, 7th Marines. It camped for 10 days on a plateau, later named Camp Carroll, about 10 miles west of the airfield at Dong Ha, providing perimeter security for a reinforced battalion of artillery concentrated there. Another Chu Lai-based 1st Marine Division chaplain to participate in Operation Prairie was Lieutenant Edward F. Kane (Roman Catholic) of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. Chaplain Kane's battalion engaged in two months of search and destroy activities near the coast, north and west of Quang Tri City.

In early September two Da Nang battalions were alerted for a move northward. Chaplain Witt with 1st Battalion, 3d Marines was the first of his regiment's chaplains to move north. "In the midst of an exciting movie on September 2d," he said, "the word was passed to return to our tents and prepare for a permanent move the following day. Short-timers wept openly, and sick-call was suddenly crowded. I am confident that the walls of Jericho col-

lapsed amid less confusion, but we made it.”⁵ Huge C-130s took the battalion north, but this time to a place called Khe Sanh and a Special Forces Camp nearby. The camp was located on a plateau high in the central mountain range, but was actually only a few miles from Laos, and south of the DMZ only 10 miles. This was a beautiful, if primitive spot inhabited mostly by Montagnard tribesmen, their elephants, assorted snakes, and scorpions. Steep cliffs bordered the plateau and beautiful waterfalls graced the scenery on every side. Chaplain Witt remarked, “It is difficult to say who looked more dejected, the Marines or the poor Special Forces we came to protect. We were part of Operation Prairie but we were so far west that the only thing we knew of the operation was what we read in the *Stars and Stripes*.”⁶ At Khe Sanh the battalion was dispersed throughout the extensive coffee groves which were unique to the area and for reasons of security, every man moved his hootch and fox-hole every few days. Meanwhile the 9th Marines were shifting both chaplains and location.

A few days after Chaplain Collins became the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines chaplain in an exchange with Chaplain McDermott who went to the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, he moved with his battalion to Phu Bai where it took over perimeter defense responsibilities. After a few weeks at Phu Bai the battalion was ordered to Dong Ha and finally to the base of the Rock Pile. While living at the Rock Pile, the concentration of troops was such that it was possible for the chaplain to walk in any one of three directions and as many as 40 to 50 men could come together for worship services. “It was at this point,” Chaplain Collins wrote, “concentrated as we were, that I really got to know my Marines as I lived out forward with them every day. While in the Rock Pile area I baptized seven Marines in a stream at the base of the hill.”⁷

Leaving the Rock Pile some weeks later, the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines made a battalion sweep through the mountains to the west. The men marched all day and slept in the rain at night. They traveled along a VC infiltration trail. On the third day contact was made with the enemy. Four men were killed and 12 wounded. Because of heavy cover from the trees and because of fog they were unable to get the dead and wounded out. It was therefore a fortunate thing that the doctor and chaplain were along to give comfort and aid to the wounded throughout the night. The engineers blew away a landing zone

and about 1200 the next day the helicopters came, and evacuation was accomplished.

Meanwhile, at Camp Pendleton, in 1966, the 5th Marine Division was reactivated for the first time since the end of World War II. Among the newly formed regiments were the 26th and 27th Marines, both of whom were to play important roles in Vietnam in the years ahead. At this point, it is the 26th Marines who enter the story. Three chaplains were attached, respectively, to 1st Battalion, 2d Battalion, and 3d Battalion, 26th Marines. They were Lieutenant Commander David L. Meschke (Independent Fundamental Churches of America), Lieutenant Commander Herbert W. Bolles (Episcopal), and Lieutenant Bede Wattigny (Roman Catholic). In July, Chaplains Meschke and Bolles deployed to the Far East with the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines becoming the Special Landing Force, relieving the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines on board the Amphibious Ready Group. After participating in two operations in the Deckhouse series near Saigon, the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines with Chaplain Meschke landed at Dong Ha for participation in Operation Deckhouse IV.

Operation Deckhouse IV was developed to present the North Vietnamese, engaged in aggression across the DMZ, with a threat of amphibious action from the sea, thus dividing the enemy's attention and his offensive forces. The 1st Battalion, 26th Marines swept coastal plain rice paddies and swampy marshland just below the DMZ and moved inland capturing and destroying enemy personnel and material. On 26 September the battalion withdrew and took up permanent positions at Hill 55 south of Da Nang.

Throughout the first two months of Operation Prairie, battalions of the 4th Marines at Phu Bai were in and out of the combat area. While one was engaged in furious combat near the DMZ, another was engaged in an operation with an entirely different code name, and another was returned to temporary reserve. Lieutenant Commander Floyd E. Sims (Southern Baptist) was with 2d Battalion, 4th Marines on Operation Prairie following his earlier duty at the Dong Ha battalion aid station. He reported:

I was most grateful when a Protestant Chaplain arrived to work with Chaplain Powell at the aid station and I could go to the field with 2d Battalion, 4th Marines. However, Operation Prairie soon developed and I again had much

the same duty, but more Protestant Chaplains were in the area so I spent more time in the field and less with the medical unit. I do not believe any duty can be as difficult emotionally for the chaplain as seeing the wounded and dead day after day.⁸

Chaplain Sims also commented on the fact that due to the operation a battalion chaplain may find that he is unable to conduct services in the field even on Sunday. There were times when services simply could not be conducted. Even though it was impossible to have formal worship, he reported, a chaplain could get better acquainted personally with the men when he was "humping it" with them in the field. The word spreads that "their" chaplain thinks enough of them to share their life. "I would never recommend a chaplain go on an operation and leave the medical facility without coverage," he wrote, "but nothing opens avenues of response quite like 'hoofing it' with the 'grunts.'"⁹ Chaplain Sims was moved to reflect upon the tragedy of war as he saw it on Operation Prairie. He was also a sensitive observer of state-side criticisms of the war. He said:

It is a shame that man cannot live in peace. War in Vietnam has resulted in many refugee villages. Some Vietnamese have fled their homes because they were no longer safe. Others have been evacuated by the government so that they would not be killed or wounded as the area is cleared of V.C. The tragedies of war are not as bad, however, as the tragedies that happen to those who dare to disregard the V.C. It appears that many religious leaders in the United States are either not aware of V.C. tactics to accomplish their goals or else they have closed their minds to such tactics. In Phong Dien the V.C. mortared the Buddhist school, the Catholic Church and the Catholic refugee village. The priest, Father Matthew, died as a result of wounds received. One child, about two, was brought to the Regimental Aid Station with brain damage and was further transferred to a military hospital for brain surgery. A middle aged woman was also seriously injured and further evacuated for treatment. Countless others were wounded, but not seriously enough to be evacuated. This was the price they had to pay for not cooperating with the V.C. I cannot see how we as Christians can afford to pass by on the other side while the enemy leaves people on the roadside to die because they believed in a different way of life.¹⁰

Chaplain Beach with the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines was involved in Operation Prairie in early and mid-August, and in Operation Pawnee I, II, and III in late August and September. He, along with all line battalion chaplains, shared the combat risks of the infantry. Mostly chaplains escaped injury, but serious injury was perhaps inevitable. It

came to Chaplain Beach while ministering to his troops on Prairie on 28 September, during an assault on Mutter's Ridge. Incoming mortar fire made a direct hit on the communication CP tent where he had taken temporary cover. He sustained serious injuries to a leg and arm and took shrapnel in the head and shoulders. He was evacuated, in serious condition, to the USS *Repose* for surgery and post-operative intensive care. Being visited on the hospital ship by Division Chaplain Morton he dictated a tape recording to the Chief of Chaplains and Chaplain Morton marvelled at the wounded chaplain's cheerfulness and the spirit in which he accepted the prospect of permanently disabling injuries. Chaplain Beach told of a hospital corpsman attending him during the mortar barrage shielding him with his body and himself being severely wounded while protecting the chaplain from flying shrapnel. Chaplain Beach said, "Every year of my ministry has been better than the one before. I guess a chaplain leaves a part of himself, sometimes physical but always spiritual, at every duty station."¹¹

In an official report to the Chief of Chaplains on Chaplain Beach's wound, III MAF Chaplain Garrett said:

Stan was with H&S Co. of his battalion when they encountered a strong enemy position on Hill 400 up near the DMZ. The Marines proceeded to assault the hill and I have heard from several sources now that Stan distinguished himself in providing a constant ministry to the wounded as they fell. One news correspondent, in his story in the *Stars and Stripes*, stated that he himself was out of food and water by the second day of the operation and "the Chaplain" came by and gave him a small can of apricots, which was all the food he had.

It was very shortly after this that a mortar round exploded about six feet from Stan. He received several flesh wounds but the major injury was to his left leg. The entire leg was laid open and the knee cap completely carried away with extensive bone damage, loss of considerable muscle and tissue. He was evacuated very quickly out to the *Repose*. It was evidently touch and go for a while as to whether they would have to amputate the leg. The last report received indicated that he was getting some movement back into the foot and that the leg would probably be saved provided no infection developed.

He was evacuated to Clark AFB on 30 September and as soon as he is able will be further evacuated.¹²

Two months later, in the 1 December issue of the FMFPac Force Chaplain's Newsletter, Chaplain John H. Craven provided an up-to-date report on Chaplain Beach's condition.

After being wounded in action on 28 September Chaplain Stan Beach was eventually medically evacuated to Tripler General Hospital in Hawaii where he is a patient at the present time. He has undergone several surgical procedures involving skin graft and is scheduled for transfer to the Naval Hospital at Great Lakes for further orthopedic treatment. Stan enjoyed a wonderful morale boost when his lovely wife was able to visit him for a few days shortly after his arrival at Tripler. Stan's spirit is indomitable and he is looking forward to the day in the near future when he can be on crutches to try out the left leg that was so badly banged up. He is using his convalescent time to good advantage. Stan shows that he was thoroughly initiated into that great fellowship of suffering which can never be fully explained; it can only be experienced.¹³

As Operation Prairie continued to increase in intensity it became apparent that more strength would be concentrated in the Quang Tri-Dong Ha-Khe Sanh areas in the months to come. In anticipation of the eventual establishment of major combat bases at Quang Tri and Dong Ha, in early October, Major General Wood B. Kyle, the 3d Marine Division Commander, began to move his command post northwards. The division headquarters moved to Phu Bai with a division forward command post being located at Dong Ha.

As 3d Marine Division units moved toward the DMZ it became apparent that the 1st Marine Division would be moved northward. In October, the 1st Marine Division Commander, Major General Herman Nickerson, Jr., moved his headquarters to Da Nang and assumed responsibility for the TAOR so long occupied by the 3d Marine Division. It was in October, then, that the 1st Marine Division assumed responsibility for Da Nang in addition to Chu Lai and the 3d Marine Division assumed military responsibility for Dong Ha in addition to the Phu Bai enclave.

On 26 October, on Operation Prairie, the chaplain to be most seriously wounded of all chaplains thus far in the war in Vietnam, took a sniper's bullet. Lieutenant Edward F. Kane (Roman Catholic) with the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines near the DMZ, was shot in the spine by a North Vietnamese sniper. Chaplain Kane's unit was conducting a search and destroy mission when it was ambushed by North Vietnamese forces. The point Marine was killed instantly. With disregard for his own safety, Chaplain Kane moved from his covered position, and under heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire, he evacuated the Marine and administered the last rites of the Catholic church. Later near Phu An

village he was moving with Kilo Company of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines when the unit came under attack from a large unit of North Vietnamese Army forces using machine gun, automatic weapons, and small arms fire. Several Marines were wounded in the initial burst of fire and were in positions exposed to continuing hostile fire. Again, disregarding danger, the chaplain moved the wounded, rendering aid and comfort. It was while he was attending to the removal of these wounded from exposed positions that he was wounded. Chaplain John H. Craven's report to the chaplains of FMFPac said:

Chaplain Ed Kane, the victim of a sniper's bullet on 26 October, is currently a patient at the Naval Hospital, Oakland, California. Ed's injury involved severe damage to the spinal cord, but in spite of the seriousness of his injury and the discomfort of being presently confined to a Stryker frame, reports reaching us indicate that the sniper's bullet missed Ed's great strong spirit.¹⁴

On 26 April 1967 Chaplain Kane was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart for his heroic achievements. As a consequence of his injury, Chaplain Kane has become permanently disabled and was medically retired from the Chaplain Corps in February 1968.

Operation Prairie, one of the longest major operations of the war in Vietnam, was to continue through the remainder of 1966. Battalions from Phu Bai and Da Nang moved in and out of the combat zone with such frequency that these chaplains came to consider Prairie to be synonymous with the war in Northern I Corps. Smaller operations were conducted concurrently with Prairie in TAORs of all three coastal enclaves, but Prairie, in actuality, represented in a major way the shift in combat activity toward the Demilitarized Zone.

Arrivals: New and Old

During this period many of the replacement chaplains were those who had responded to the call to the nation's churches for pastors, priests, and rabbis to join the chaplaincy at a time of initial personnel needs. When they assumed the call they were, in many cases, faced with the shock of Vietnam almost immediately.

Lieutenant Lisle E. Stewart (United Methodist) was commissioned on 10 February 1966 and his first duty was with the 3d Marine Division as the Protestant chaplain at Company C, 3d Medical Battalion.

Remembering the demands of those first weeks he said:

I found that my daily routine during my first two months at Third Medical Battalion was routine only in the fact that we were on call 24 hours a day. My first day aboard, the first wounded man brought in died before my eyes. He had consanguinated. This initial introduction to my role as a field hospital chaplain left an indelible impression in my emotional fiber and it took several days to recover from the shock. This was rude awakening to this peace loving, and for the most part, sheltered pastor who had just come on active duty. Each day brought its endless line of tragedy. The heartache of it never changed, but I began to accept the fact of its reality, taking each day in stride.¹⁵

The records of the civilian clergymen now in uniform and in Vietnam were testimonies to their adaptability and dedication to reaching the Marines whatever the risk of physical or emotional vitality. Chaplain Stewart also pointed to this quality implicitly in his report:

I remember one man in particular whose right hand had been blown off. When he was first admitted, he was asked whether he was right or left handed. He replied matter of factly, "Yesterday I was righthanded". Later in the ward, I noticed that he seemed to be in great contemplation, so I asked him if I could be of any help. He calmly announced, "Oh, I was just thinking which I wanted, a clamp or a hook. I think I'll get a hook with a pearl rim." Such acceptance was more typical than not. I have never seen greater courage and more rugged constitutions than these youths displayed. Mine has been the gain in their ministry to me.¹⁶

Many times the medical company chaplains would assist in carrying litters, getting supplies, or help as requested. When KIAs were brought in, the chaplains were notified and would give the last rites or speak words of commendation. At times they were faced with explosions from the sometimes mutilated Marines such as: "Is it worth it, Chaplain? Is it worth it?" and "Tell them to stop Chaplain. Tell them to stop." Remarks such as these haunted them but challenged them to have the right words of comfort.

In early August, Assistant Division Chaplain Maguire was due to return to the United States. His reflection on his duty in Vietnam included a testimony to the skill and sensitivity of the American youth committed to combat, and the deep emotional involvement experienced by the chaplain with his Marines. "I have always felt, when I have seen their torn bodies," he wrote, "that something more is demanded than the excellent care of doctors and

Corpsmen. I have felt that a trumpeting of gratitude and praise is called for as a fitting human response. When the chips are down, they are amazingly selfless."¹⁷ Chaplain Maguire then reflected the struggle of his pastoral heart when he reported:

Vietnam is a beautiful but sad land. The sickness and poverty and the sufferings cause us grief. One leaves here too, with sad memories of men we know well who died here. I would like to repeat again the prayer from the III MAF Memorial Day Service at FLSG, 1966.

"Guide us, O Lord, in our proceedings this morning as we seek to render due honor to those who gave their lives for our country. Help us to hallow in memory those who by right are unforgettable. May we of whom less has been asked be inspired by their sacrifice to dedicate more of our heart and hand to the service of our country and our fellow man. Amen."¹⁸

A June arrival, Lieutenant Commander Michael A. Ondo (Roman Catholic), recorded similar reactions. He served as a sometimes circuit-riding chaplain with MAG-11; 2d Battalion, 5th Marines; 1st Battalion, 3d Marines; and A Medical Company, where he exercised his longest ministry. He remembered: "We chaplains had our hands full. To administer the Sacraments of the Church, to pray, and to console became a routine expectation. I am deeply grateful for the privilege of such service."¹⁹ It was during this time that he reached out to his Marines in ministry, especially those often forgotten. He wrote:

My heart goes out to all these great Marines who work in Graves Registration. Honestly, they have a thankless job. To me they exemplify the corporal works of mercy with utmost distinction. We became fast friends. It was obvious, as they exercised meticulous care of their fallen comrades, that they cared very much. Heroes they are without exception. They are God's sentries in the Halls of Heaven.²⁰

Lieutenant Robert M. Radasky (Russian Orthodox), who was detached in August, after providing an Orthodox ministry for I Corps personnel, had served his entire tour as administrative assistant to Force Chaplain Garrett. He extended his ministry in still another unique way by reaching significantly into the relationship of Marines and Vietnamese. He felt strongly that the "new kind of war" included a new and profound element of unique personal importance. Marines could live next door to the population of Da Nang and a large number of Vietnamese neighbors would work in and around their compound; American/Vietnamese contacts would be frequent and at the "eyeball to eyeball" level.

Yet, linguistic and cultural barriers created an expected coolness. More a cause of this was the element of suspicion. Rumors of infiltration were common and one really could not distinguish between the friendly Vietnamese from the Viet Cong. Chaplain Radasky strove to understand the Vietnamese people and transferred his knowledge to the troops most effectively. He remembered:

As the chaplain becomes the unit resource for information on behavior patterns of the Vietnamese, he finds frequent opportunity to pass on knowledge. It appeared to me that after chaplains took steps to learn the culture, they were able to reflect an assurance about the situation which in effect counteracted casual rumor. For example, a great deal of tension was created by uncertainty about the course of the war. Were the Vietnamese really interested? Was the concept "freedom" in our heads only? Would we be left to do the dirty work for them? Questions like these were answered when the chaplain was able to provide an overview of the Vietnamese history and culture.²¹

Casual observation of Vietnamese life created bewilderment. But the Vietnamese became people, human beings, when their lives were analyzed and explained. It was really apparent in Vietnam that the troops had a "need to know" about the people they were involved with. Especially when many were so involved day to day. They had to learn, for example, to show concern for the people who appeared unconcerned. They could do it better if they knew why the people appeared that way.

Chaplain Radasky's comments on the Personal Response Project in which he had been involved reflect the purpose of many Marines in late 1966:

In spite of culture and linguistic barriers, I felt the Marines made real progress in one year to overcome the "strangeness" of fighting a war well past the beaches and smack in the middle of a local population. Looking back over the year I think American-Vietnamese relations improved for Marines in three steps: (1) acceptance of the fact that we would remain well beyond the beach, (2) recognition of the "new kind of war" and what it implied when weapons were not firing, and (3) response to the official decision that we had some need to know about the place, the situation, and the people. It was in the last step that chaplains were called forth in a special way to provide a "new ministry." Because so much of Vietnamese culture is founded on religious conceptualizations, the chaplain was looked toward as a resource even before official action provided him with the tools.²²

In mid-August MCB-9 arrived in Vietnam for its second deployment. Chaplain Robert S. Collins

(Lutheran) who had been with the battalion on Da Nang East from late October 1965 to February 1966, returned with MCB-9 for his second deployment to Vietnam. During this tour he had difficulty physically reaching his men. His battalion was based just north of Da Nang but operated a rock crushing operation, road building unit, and a bridge building effort at Ba To, Min Long, and Thuong Duc. MCB-9 also built structures for three Special Forces camps, an Army camp in the Delta, and for the Marine units at Hue-Phu Bai. He reported:

On deployment the men of the battalion are so spread out, doing so many different kinds of construction projects it is almost a full time job just keeping track of everyone. With the men of the battalion spread out so far, much of the chaplain's time was spent trying to see each man as often as possible. For our men at the main camp and at the Rock Crusher, Sunday services were always available. For the men serving with the Special Forces, I would plan on visiting them every other week. Interestingly enough, I'd always find that the further I got away from the base camp, and the more likely we were to encounter enemy activity, the greater the attendance would be at our mid-week worship service. These visits with the men, out on the job, are really the most fruitful person to person type ministry I can imagine. Sometimes it is merely a chance to shoot the breeze, yet for many of the men, the chaplain's visit is an opportunity to open their hearts to the meaning of the word of God in their lives today. It is truly a fascinating ministry, and a very necessary one, helping those construction men of the Seabees build a solid and lasting faith.²³

More Growing Pains

Three factors influenced the assignment of newly arriving 3d Marine Division chaplains from mid-September through the end of 1966. First was the need to relieve those being detached on permanent change of station orders for new duty in the United States. Second, the move northward to an unsettled and developing structural-operational environment gave rise to new demands upon the Chaplain Corps ministry and necessitated the reassignment of chaplains and the assignment of newly reporting chaplains to billets recently established to meet specific needs. Third, and closely related to the first, was the turnover of chaplain leadership of the division and III MAF into new hands.

In September the first of four new chaplains to report for duty, Lieutenant Commander Boris Geeza (Eastern Orthodox), represented the denominational relief for Chaplain Radasky who had been detached on orders the previous month. Arriving on 16

September, Chaplain Geeza was assigned duty as administrative assistant to the division chaplain to meet the need for a chaplain in that billet which was vacated a week before by the medical evacuation of Chaplain Moody. For all practical purposes Chaplain Geeza's denominational coverage of Far East Marines was delayed until the urgent need for an administrative assistant could be met through other means.

The second September arrival, Commander Marlin D. Seiders (United Methodist) was slated as the relief for Assistant Division Chaplain Maguire who also had been detached on orders in August. Chaplain Seiders moved immediately into his new duties as assistant division chaplain and made preparations for the move north.

Because Chaplain Beach was wounded at Mutter's Ridge on 28 September, an urgent and immediate requirement for a replacement in the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines was imposed upon Division Chaplain Morton. He discussed the matter with Lieutenant Ronald L. Hedwall (Lutheran) of the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, who had provided religious coverage for the separate and supporting-arms battalions.

Chaplain Hedwall's relief in the supporting arms battalions at Da Nang was Lieutenant Commander Robert S. Borden (United Presbyterian) who arrived on 28 September to begin his tour of duty in Vietnam. He was to remain with the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion until the middle of the following year. Chaplain Borden inherited a chapel complex of two buildings in the camp, one a chapel seating approximately 100 persons, the other an office building with two offices, a library, and a smaller chapel. Over the next several months a public address system was added, and thanks to the generosity of the III MAF chaplain, a Hammond electronic organ.

The final change to take place in late September occurred when Lieutenant James E. Ammons (American Baptist) arrived on 28 September to relieve Chaplain Dunks with the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines on the southern perimeter of Da Nang. As it had been for nearly a year, the battalion was spread from the Thu Bon River south to the industrial complex at An Hoa. There were six major locations along Liberty Road with the command group at An Hoa. Patrols fanned from each of these positions in road sweeps, ambushes, and continuous sweeps through

the rice fields and surrounding hills. Chaplain Ammons wrote:

To cover the units adequately, I found it best to catch resupply runs, start at the farthestmost position, have a service at 1800 when most of the men were in from patrols, stay over night and catch a road sweep or patrol to the next position in the morning. Having services at this time allowed for maximum participation, as well as giving me the time to get closer to the men, by sharing the hardships they were enduring. This became my regular schedule, broken only by Operations Macon, Kern, and Mississippi, during which I accompanied the Command Group. The miraculously lucky Father Tom Kenny unfailingly ran this gamut once each week for Catholic coverage.

Chaplain Ammon's battalion remained south of Da Nang until relieved by the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines of the 1st Marine Division, at which time the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines moved north of Da Nang to positions previously occupied by the 3d Marines, now near the DMZ. The battalion TAOR north of Da Nang extended to the top of the mountain above Hai Van Pass, then west into the jungles, and south to "Happy Valley." "We were spread," Chaplain Ammons said, "into nine fixed positions which I covered each week, plus five CAC units. Again, Father Tom Kenny, our Regimental Chaplain, tried to do in one day what I was attempting to do in a week."²⁶

October brought four additional chaplains to the 3d Marine Division and set off a chain of moves related to changing needs near the 4th Marines and the movement of the 3d Division northward. It became apparent that the load on Chaplain Powell with Task Force Delta, attempting to coordinate the activities of chaplains in the 4th Marines as well, was more than a single chaplain could accomplish. It was decided that two shifts were required to meet the mounting needs. First the task force and regimental billets were to be divided. Chaplain Powell was assigned as Task Force Delta Chaplain to remain at Dong Ha to coordinate chaplain coverage from that point. Arriving in October, Lieutenant Preston C. Oliver (United Presbyterian) was assigned to assist Chaplain Powell, to become Assistant Task Force Chaplain, and to provide Protestant coverage at the Delta Medical Aid Station.

In the 4th Marines, Chaplain Sims of the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines was reassigned as regimental chaplain and was relieved by newly arriving Lieutenant Commander Eugene B. Davis (Presbyterian



Department of Defense (USN) Photo K-43358

The church pennant flies from the bamboo flagpole of the 4th Marines Chapel at Camp Evans, during the 1967 Christmas visit by Navy Chief of Chaplains James W. Kelly.

Church of the United States). Chaplain Davis reported:

2d Battalion, 4th Marines turned me loose to roam the hills to hit the outlying platoon and company positions around Phu Bai, and to ride the ridge to eight Combined Action Platoons to the north and south of Phu Bai. Our men were scattered everywhere, and getting to them was my daily duty. With God's sustaining power, some poor shooting on Charley's part, and some near misses from mines, etc., we reached the men. Thanks for the good help and work of roving and accompanying Catholic padres, services of all types were provided on a continuing basis. The command was great and supported our efforts in a maximum manner.²⁷

The 4th Marines Regimental Chapel was to be refurbished and become the new 3d Marine Division Chapel. Many other changes were to become

necessary before the enclave was to become adequate to house the division headquarters. Chaplain Hubble had remained behind in Da Nang for liaison with 1st Marine Division Chaplain, Captain David J. Casazza (Roman Catholic). Within a few weeks Task Force Delta was absorbed by the new command, 3d Marine Division (Forward) and Chaplain Seiders was assigned to Dong Ha for coordination of chaplains' activities in the area.

When the new 3d Marine Division Chaplain, Captain Henry T. Lavin (Roman Catholic), arrived in Da Nang on 16 October, he was informed that his long journey from the United States was not yet ended. The 3d Marine Division Chaplain's Office, which he was to occupy for the next year, was now in Phu Bai. Chaplain Lavin arrived at the division CP to be

met as he said by the energetic Frank Morton and the quiet "Smokey" Seiders. "The very next day," he remembered, "I took off on the first of my many trips north to the DMZ. At Dong Ha I met Chaplain Powell who, apparently, knew everyone at Dong Ha, Camp Carroll and Khe Sanh. I hardly knew where I was since we traveled by chopper, but my first views of the Rock Pile, the Razorback, and Mutter's Ridge will remain as lasting ones in my memory."²⁸

Chaplain Morton remained in the area, briefing Chaplain Lavin and completing his turnover file, until 25 October. "Chaplain Lavin and his new team," said Chaplain Morton, "have the new situation and the monsoons. The TAORs are smaller; the units are concentrated; the chaplain requirements and assignments remain essentially the same. 'Stay loose' still holds as the appropriate word for those serving with the U.S. Marine Corps."²⁹

That was appropriate advice. Chaplains generally move around a great deal in combat because of their widely dispersed units. But with the shipping of whole divisions in Vietnam, the movement was extreme. One chaplain summed it up:

In retrospect 1966 had indeed been quite a year. A quick capsule of events might be somewhat like this: Seven moves; six commanding officers; two chapels dedicated; one rebuilt; three-hundred-forty Divine Services conducted; experienced happiness, heartbreak, frustration, heat, cold, discomfort, comfort on R&R in Bangkok; survived what we referred to as the "Dai Loc Scrounge," the Ten-month Syndrome, when all that used to be done routinely with enthusiasm begins to take so much effort; have lost close acquaintances in battle, and gained friendships that will last for many years; and above all, became deeply conscious of the validity and relevance of the ministry to which I have been called.³⁰

Lieutenant Commander Otto E. Kinzler (United Methodist) who arrived in December 1965, had been with the 12th Marines for the entire 12 months of his tour on deployment. He had been joined in the regiment by Lieutenant Roger K. Hansen (Lutheran) in February and from that time on the two chaplains had provided a religious ministry for the scattered batteries. In November Chaplain Hansen had been reassigned from 2d Battalion, 12th Marines to 3d Battalion, 12th Marines and relocated to Cam Lo in the Dong Ha area. "I marvelled," he said, "at how quickly men accept a new chaplain into their midst. The cooperation of this group was wonderful to experience. The attitude of the command, the interest of the troopers, plus I must add, the fact that we

were really 'exposed' made for a fertile ministry."³¹ Chaplain Kinzler remained in Da Nang until the regimental headquarters itself moved to the Artillery Plateau.

On 7 September Commander John R. Hershberger (Lutheran) reported to III MAF as assistant force chaplain. Unlike Chaplain Radasky for whom he was the functional relief, Chaplain Hershberger was assigned to a newly established billet on the MAF staff. The assistant force chaplain was directly responsible to the force chaplain and was to assist him in any area deemed necessary by the force chaplain. His concerns were to be those of the force chaplain and his daily activities in direct support of his many and varied duties and responsibilities.

Chaplain Hershberger was well oriented to the work of the force chaplain by the second week of October when Captain Earle V. Lyons Jr. (United Presbyterian) reported to relieve Chaplain Garrett. Chaplain Garrett's turnover was comprehensive and thorough as he had planned and, as a result of Chaplain Lyons' understanding of the Marine Corps and enthusiasm for rapid adjustment to the new job, was most successful. By the time Chaplain Garrett was detached on 15 October, Chaplain Lyons was well prepared for both the possibilities and the problems of the new assignment.

Immediate concerns for Chaplain Lyons were those of geographical orientation, establishing his own working relationship within the MAF Headquarters where he had been graciously welcomed, and familiarization with the requirements of the changing combat ministry. He was faced with relocation of his offices to Da Nang East which was accomplished on 21 November, and the myriad administrative details connected with the activities of chaplains within the MAF.

Chaplain Lyons envisioned the responsibilities of the billet as Chaplain Garrett had seen them. Matters transcending division, wing, and Force Logistic Command (FLC) authority, or crossing command lines came under his cognizance. MAF-wide programs in which chaplains of all commands participated, he coordinated. Contacts with FMFPac, Headquarters Marine Corps, and Chief of Chaplains were also the responsibility of the MAF Chaplain.

One of the first problem areas to which Chaplain Lyons turned his attention was that of unusual delays in chaplain reporting dates resulting from the requirement that they undergo Field Medical Training

at Camp Pendleton, enroute to duty in Vietnam. Chaplain Garrett had addressed himself to the problem in July 1966 but it remained unresolved. Chaplains were at times required to wait a week or 10 days for a class to convene at Camp Pendleton, then assimilate two weeks of training which was considered by some to be of questionable specific value for the chaplain. Chaplain Lyons was concerned that undue delays in chaplain reporting continued to require division and wing chaplains to leave billets temporarily vacant while waiting reliefs. He suggested that an indoctrination course could be established in Vietnam as a viable substitute for the training at Camp Pendleton. While the issue of pre-Vietnam chaplain training was not to be resolved until Chaplain Lyons was more than halfway through his tour, that and other personnel matters, such as the adequate number of chaplains for the Force Logistic Command were those which occupied his immediate attention upon arrival in III MAF.

1st Marine Division Chaplains

The months of September and October 1966 brought a significant improvement in Chaplain Casazza's 1st Marine Division roster of chaplains. Seven chaplains arrived and three were detached. The net result was a gain of four badly needed chaplains.

On 5 September Lieutenant Robert R. Cunningham (United Presbyterian) reported and was assigned to the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion in anticipation of Chaplain Flanagan's detachment on 26 September.

Chaplain Cunningham was to enjoy his service to 1st Reconnaissance Battalion. He remembered:

I became deeply attached to the Recon men, as they carried out their hazardous duty deep in hostile territory and away from the safety of any perimeter. Individual names and faces as well as the platoon call-signs became well known to me. These small bands of brave and proud Marines daily pitted their lives against insurmountable odds in order to carry out their primary mission of observing enemy activity and troop movements. In order to familiarize myself both with the mission and personnel of Recon, I took advantage of every opportunity to go on reconnaissance flights and, on occasion, also accompanied patrols as far as their destination in the jungle and then returned. These flights always evoked appreciation and admiration for the Recon Marines and the hardships they endured in the hostile jungle.³²

With characteristic dedication, Chaplain Cunningham exemplified the willingness of chaplains to

recognize new patterns of ministry and adjust their personal approaches to meet them. One aspect of his ministry during these days was valued highly. It was the informal gathering with each outgoing patrol at the edge of the helo pad. Usually following the last-minute briefing by the patrol commander the chaplain was invited to hold brief devotions. Chaplain Flanagan had begun the practice. Chaplain Cunningham wrote:

It was a moving experience to stand among these young men, their faces obscured by camouflage paint, their backs bent under the weight of heavy packs, and reassure them of the abiding presence of God. These informal moments always closed with the Lord's Prayer in unison. An even more diligent effort was made to be present at the helo pad whenever the weary and worn-out men returned at the end of their patrols. Not uncommon were the occasions when helos were heard in the middle of the night and everyone knew instinctively that a patrol had encountered difficulty and had had to be emergency extracted. I made it a habit to be present whenever the emergency extractions occurred and especially when casualties were brought in.³³

Reconnaissance battalion chaplains regularly commented on the inspirational nature of the pride of the platoons and the high spirits of the men exhibited during the most distressing circumstances. They repeatedly witnessed the men returning with four day's growth of beard masking the fatigue of their faces; their clothing blotched with blood where numerous jungle leeches had feasted; their hands, fingers, and feet grotesquely wrinkled by continuous exposure to the monsoon rains, and yet they noted the genuine joy and exuberance which marked their reunion with buddies who were at the helo pad awaiting their return. It was easy to sense the common bond which united these men, a bond forged by mutual participation in a demanding and perilous task.

Possessed of a remarkable sense of humor himself, Chaplain Cunningham recognized the grim humor of the reconnaissance Marine and supplied the account of the following incident:

Soon after a patrol had been inserted in the jungle it became apparent to the Operations Office in the Battalion that whoever was sending the "sit-reps" was misreading the map and was not aware of it. As additional reports were received it was evident that according to their information the patrol's position was down in a wide valley where no right-thinking recon patrol should be. Consequently the Operations Officer sent out the following message, "What are you doing out there?" After a few moments delay, back



Photo courtesy of Chaplain Hugh F. Lecky, Jr.

Chaplain John J. O'Connor converses with the Bishop of Hue and Bishop of Da Nang.

came the startling reply, "Saving the world for Democracy of course!"³⁴

With a battalions such as Recon and Amtracs, additional services were scheduled during the week in order to reach those personnel who were in the field over the weekend. Both a weekly Communion service and a Bible study class were held with moderate success. But just as the religious program began to gain impetus, elements of both the Recon and Amtracs were shifted to Da Nang to occupy part of the area vacated by the 3d Marine Division as it moved to Phu Bai and Dong Ha. This set-back was only temporary, however, for soon elements from both 1st and 3d Reconnaissance Battalions arrived to reinforce and operate without their complete units.

Chaplain Cunningham reported: "Not only did these men integrate well but also gave all religious services their loyal interest and support."³⁵

On 4 October Lieutenant Robert M. Weeks (Lutheran) arrived at the 1st Marine Division and was immediately pressed into duty as administrative assistant to the division chaplain. His major task was the movement of the office to Da Nang. He vividly recalled:

"Mount Out" was the word given on 10 October 1966, because the First Marine Division Headquarters were being moved to Da Nang to replace the Third Marine Division Headquarters. The Division Chaplain's Office had to be put into full operation within twenty-four hours. Correspondence became a major concern, and a very careful



Photo 1st MarDiv

Chaplain Robert A. Flanagan offers Mass in a village near Chu Lai. There was no priest and no church. Mass is said in a villager's hut. Women are on the other side of the altar.

use of the thirty-day quantity of mount out supplies was necessary. Chaplain Casazza was a great teacher and I learned the value of accurate correspondence and correct decisions as an Administrative Assistant. It was a great privilege to have served with Chaplain Casazza as his Administrative Assistant.³⁶

One of Chaplain Weeks' duties was to conduct worship services as assigned by the division chaplain. This gave him the opportunity to make trips into the field. For three months he supplied Protestant coverage for the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines which involved flying to the battalion CP, 30 miles south of Da Nang. On one occasion while talking to a Marine he asked the young man to move to a closer seat. Hardly had he moved when a round was fired through the seat vacated by the Marine. On another occasion the helicopter which had dropped him off at the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines crashed shortly after taking off for a return trip. "Christmas Eve," he wrote, "was spent in a bunker full of water that had an oversupply of mosquitos. That was a great

Christmas because of the fellowship with the field Marines. Three weeks later I was to hold a Memorial Service for seventy-one men, with many of whom I had spent Christmas."³⁷ Chaplain Weeks was often accompanied on these trips by Lieutenant Conon J. Meehan (Roman Catholic) who held mass at the same time as the Protestant service.

Just after the move north, Chaplain Casazza reassigned Chaplain Lemieux to the 7th Marines as a relief for Regimental Chaplain Lieutenant Commander Roy A. Baxter (Southern Baptist) who was to be detached on 15 October. Chaplain Baxter, who had served the regiment since May, had participated in Operations Oakland and Jackson and a number of battalion-sized combat sweeps. During the final month of his duty with the regiment Chaplain Baxter, with the assistance of Chaplains Capodanno and Glover and the regimental commander, had organized the eminently successful 7th Marines Lay Leader Conference on 10 September. In his final report, Chaplain Baxter wrote:

The spiritual concern of our Regimental Commander, Colonel L. F. Snoddy, Jr., and his predecessor, Colonel E. H. Haffey, was demonstrated by their concern for the needs of personnel. The few minutes spent at divine services is a decided asset in the performance of military duties. If God is put first everything else will take its proper place. The Regimental Commander believed this firmly, and he directed that a Regimental Lay Leader Conference be conducted on 10 September.³⁸

One of the highlights of the program was Colonel Snoddy's opening speech. In it he said:

I want to impress upon you the importance which I as Regimental Commander, attach to the Lay Leader Program. Fundamentally, the Regimental Commander is responsible for everything the men of his Regiment do. Likewise, he is responsible for the things which his men do not do, which they should do. I cannot pass the responsibilities on to anyone; they are mine for better or for worse. I accept these responsibilities willingly, however, because I have immediately available some important help. There is already established a system of organization which we call the Chain of Command. Then too, there are people of various ranks and skills to make the system work effectively. . . . Where spiritual matters are concerned, the chaplain is the Commander's principal helper, but the spiritual welfare of a command requires more individual effort than the Commander and his chaplains together can generate. This is particularly true in combat. . . . It is difficult for chaplains to be in all the places where they are needed or where they would like to be. Thus there is the need for the Lay Leader.³⁹

The incoming Regimental Chaplain, Chaplain Lemieux, also noted that the attitude of the command was inspirational and challenging, and the leadership exciting. He wrote:

Colonel Snoddy was one who held "court" in his "domain." At mess the staff was seated at a "round table" and Colonel Snoddy was the presiding figure. Likewise, in religious matters, matters of morals, the colonel was also the presiding figure and his actions were more than merely following what a chaplain might recommend. Rather, he had his own moral standards and was perfectly capable of functioning and exercising command interest in this regard, with or without the concurrence of the chaplain. Colonel Snoddy's moral integrity was obvious to all who came into contact with him, and his chapel interest was consistent with his convictions.⁴⁰

The combat situation of the 7th Marines was quite a bit different from that of the 1st Marines. The terrain was not quite so severe and the Marines tended to operate more closely with ARVN forces and ROK Marines. As a consequence they were able to keep the rear areas quite secure. "One could drive on the road into the Division at night with the lights on."⁴¹

However, more operations were conducted when the 1st Marines and the 7th Marines pressed the enemy in the forward areas, driving them to the foothills and thereby reducing their infiltration capability. The enemy in and around Chu Lai appeared to be less sophisticated than those at Da Nang even though there also seemed to be more contact with larger units.

Although the contact was relatively light, it was present with the fear and risk that combat always involved. Chaplains in this area uniformly regarded the risk as worth it for the opportunity to reach out to the Marine. One chaplain expressed it beautifully:

Although I joined the Battalion with an anxious heart and mind, the anxiety was soon relieved. The more I entered into my work, the less anxious I became. Life in the battalion was real fine. It is true, there were many things that could have made life more enjoyable. Yet in all honesty, I would not trade my experience with the infantry for anything.

For me there were many avenues of ministry. Some of my most cherished moments were spent around the Lord's Table as we experienced the fellowship of God's grace and love. Grace and love are theological terms, but over here they seem to take on much meaning. Whether it was a worship service or just an informal chat with a trooper, the reality of God's love and plan for men became quite pronounced. God was real. He was alive and extremely active in the lives of the men of the battalion.⁴²

This attitude of Marines was noted also by Chaplain Meehan now with the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines in replacement of the seriously wounded Chaplain Kane. Chaplain Meehan was tremendously impressed by the men of the battalion. After referring to the fine qualities in the battalion's leadership, he said:

By far the finest examples of humans were this "lost generation." I still find it difficult to speak about these men without becoming emotional. Having spent nearly ten months and making nearly 13 odd operations with these men, I have a deep respect and love for them. Recently, a corporal whom I visited in the First Medical Battalion, moaned over the "young kids sent out here by the Marine Corps." This leader felt that these young Marines were too new and inexperienced. I asked him how old he was. His reply was, "nineteen." His concern was ordinary. The "lost generation" were concerned about the people they lived with, the enemy they fought, and the people who suffered.⁴³

*Seabees Chaplains in I Corps,
October-December 1966*

Four Seabee battalions arrived during the final



Photo taken at the dedication of 1st LAAM's Chapel, 1 October 1966. Chaplains (from left to right): J. F. Weaver; W. C. Davis; K. A. Mitchell; J. R. Hersberger; R. F. Wood; W. F. Wright; J. C. Brown; D. B. Saltzman; M. D. Seiders; P. C. Hammerl; and R. W. Fullilove. Vietnamese church leaders (on the left): Father Socks from Hoa Khanh Catholic Village and Tich Thinh Gias from Phun Tuong Buddhist Village. The white-clad sisters and students are from the Sacred Heart Catholic School in Da Nang.

quarter of 1966, two each in October and December. Lieutenant Commander Robert E. Blade (United Presbyterian) with MCB-58 arrived with his battalion which relieved MCB-1 at Da Nang's Camp Haskins in late October.

Camp Haskins also housed the 30th Naval Construction Regiment which exercised operational control of all Vietnam-based construction battalions. MCB-58 was the second of nine newly commissioned battalions to be organized specifically for service in Vietnam, MCB-40 at Chu Lai being the first. Camp Haskins, also called Red Beach, was six miles north of Da Nang located near FLC and along the Da Nang Bay.

The men of MCB-58 were engaged in such projects as road building, cantonment construction,

well-drilling, minor airbase construction, and quarry operation. One site was south of them at the 1st Marines command post where they upgraded roads and built huts for a Marine LAAM battery.

Chaplain Blade's duties included a major Civic Action project. "On 24 December 1966," he wrote, "a Flying Tiger cargo plane crashed on the hamlet of Bien Tai killing 115 people. It was the worst crash in Vietnam history. We rebuilt some 32 homes for the families of the hamlet. Other projects continued through June of 1967 when the battalion was relieved."⁴⁴

The second Seabee chaplain to arrive in October was Lieutenant E. Blant Ferguson (Cumberland Presbyterian) of MCB-5. Chaplain Ferguson had relieved Commander Everett B. Nelson (American

Baptist) in March while the battalion was at Camp Hoover and had returned to the United States for the period of May to October. One of Chaplain Nelson's turnover practices indicates another area of chaplain outreach while in foreign lands. During the initial turnover in March 1966, Chaplain Nelson had introduced his relief to Da Nang area missionaries. Chaplain Ferguson wrote:

While in Da Nang I had a good working relationship with the Protestant and Catholic pastors and missionaries stationed in this northern city. Chaplain Nelson acquainted me with the city of Da Nang and with missionaries of the Southern Baptist Convention, Christian and Missionary Alliance, and Worldwide Evangelization Crusade. I highly recommend this procedure as a means of establishing contact with local clergy.⁴⁵

Heavily engaged in civic action, Chaplain Ferguson produced a successful program. During one eight-month deployment more than \$1,300 was contributed from the MCB-5 Chapel Funds to various missionary enterprises in Da Nang East. Missionaries were invited to speak to the men during divine worship services, where they told of unusual experiences and showed slides and movies of personal endeavor to relate the Christian Gospel to the Vietnamese. Chaplain Ferguson completed the March-May 1966 deployment, a following one at Da Nang, and one deployment at Dong Ha during his two-year tenure of duty.

The only Seabee Chaplain during the period to arrive as the relief for a chaplain already in country with his battalion was Lieutenant Richard D. Delleney (Southern Baptist) who arrived on 10 November as the relief for Chaplain Sheldon on his second deployment with MCB-10. Chaplain Delleney completed the final three months of the battalion's deployment at Camp Hoover in Da Nang and was to return again in 1967.

Two Seabee Chaplains arrived in December. Lieutenant Carl W. Erickson (Lutheran) with MCB-62, which relieved MCB-7 at Camp Campbell, Phu Bai and Chaplain J. F. Harris' MCB-8 relieved MCB-3 at Rosemary Point, Camp Miller, Chu Lai.

Christmas 1966

In a letter of 6 August to the Chief of Chaplains, General Walt had invited Chaplain Kelly to return

to Vietnam for a second Christmas visit. He wrote:

If you find it possible, we would be most happy to have you visit us again this year. I recall with gratitude the fine contribution which you made to our religious emphasis of Christmas and I have heard many comments since that visit as to the morale effect of your visit among my chaplains. They continue to do an outstanding job among our men and I am certain that another visit from you would accomplish the same effect among the entirely new "generation" of Chaplains who will be here on next Christmas. If you can come, please plan to be with us for a week preceding Christmas so we will not have to keep you going at the same tremendous pace that you kept last time.⁴⁶

In the midst of the move from old offices to the new ones in the III MAF Headquarters compound at Da Nang East, Chaplains Lyons and Hershberger prepared the itinerary for Chaplain Kelly's forthcoming Christmas visit. This year, as the last, he would be accompanied by a Roman Catholic chaplain from the Chaplain's Division of the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Captain Edward A. Slattery (Roman Catholic) was to accompany him, partly to take care of many procedural details of the trip, and also to provide Roman Catholic Masses in areas where Chaplain Kelly was visiting and preaching. Chaplain Lyons' proposal for Chaplain Kelly's itinerary was detailed and as the Chief of Chaplains had directed, made it possible to visit as large a number of commands, chaplains, hospitals, and chapels as possible within the limits of a five-day visit.

Perhaps typical of the activity and joy of the Christmas season was the experience of Chaplain Meehan who extended his ministry beyond the Marine opportunities to the concerns of Vietnamese.

At Christmas he said Mass for almost 450 Vietnamese. He had been saying Mass for the Vietnamese people and their children for some time. At first, attendance had been poor. As the word spread, he started to have about 80 to 90 people attend every Sunday. When Christmas came the people were urged to get one of their own priests from Da Nang. This they did. On Christmas Eve, the weather became so bad that the priest could not come to An Hoa. Frantically rearranging his own schedule and bringing down his own Marines to sing, Chaplain Meehan set up Mass for the Vietnamese at ten o'clock at night. The Vietnamese had been given permission to have Mass in a huge Butler Building. When he arrived the place had been decorated into a beautiful chapel. The people had put up decorations

and built an altar. The children were dressed as well as they could. He remembered:

When the Mass began the Vietnamese sang the Mass, my own men sang Christmas carols both before and after the Mass. Also participating in the singing were the German Peace Corps representatives. These dedicated men and women of Germany and Austria sang in their own native language. The startling moment of the whole night came at the Consecration of the Mass. As I started to say

the words of Consecration, the Vietnamese began to beat out a rhythm on their drums. It kept getting faster and faster as I approached the time for adoration. The drums conveyed a great expectancy and an overpowering note of dignity. Abruptly, after the Consecration, the drums ceased, and Christ was on the altar. It was one of the most moving experiences of all my dealings with the Vietnamese people. It seemed even to my men that at that moment Vietnamese, American and German were united as one in thanksgiving for the Birth of Christ.⁴⁷